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A SHORTER EGO

MY BOOKS

Novels

RESPONSIBILITY
BLESSED ARE THE RICH
GEMEL IN LONDON

Belles-Lettres

L OF C (LINES OF COMMUNICATION)
FANTASIES AND IMPROMPTUS
WHITE HORSE AND RED LION
ON AN ENGLISH SCREEN
AGATF'S FOLLY
THE COMMON TOUCH
KINGDOMS FOR HORSES
BAD MANNERS
EXPRESS AND ADMIRABLE
THURSDAYS AND FRIDAYS

Essays of the Theatre

BUZZ, BUZZ !
ALARUMS AND EXCURSIONS
AT HALF-PAST EIGHT
THE CONTEMPORARY THEATRE, 1923
THE CONTEMPORARY THEATRE, 1924
THE CONTEMPORARY THEATRE, 1925
THE CONTEMPORARY THEATRE, 1926
A SHORT VIEW OF THE ENGLISH STAGE
PLAYGOING
THEIR HOUR UPON THE STAGE
MY THEATRE TALKS
FIRST NIGHTS
MORE FIRST NIGHTS
THE AMAZING THEATRE
THESE WERE ACTORS
BRIEF CHRONICLES
RED LETTER NIGHTS
IMMOMENT TOYS

Biography

RACHEL

Anthologies

THE ENGLISH DRAMATIC CRITICS, 1660-1932
SPEAK FOR ENGLAND
HERE'S RICHNESS !

Autobiography

EGO
EGO 2
EGO 3
EGO 4
EGO 5
EGO 6
EGO 7



A SHORTER EGO

VOLUME TWO

EGO 4—EGO 5—EGO 6

The Autobiography of JAMES AGATE

*As my stuff settles into shape, I am told
(and sometimes myself discover, uneasily,
but feel all right about it in calmer
moments) it is mainly autobiographic and
even egotistic after all—which I finally
accept, and am contented so.*

WALT WHITMAN



LONDON

GEORGE G. HARRAP & CO. LTD.

SYDNEY TORONTO BOMBAY STOCKHOLM

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THIS BOOK IS PRODUCED IN
COMPLETE CONFORMITY WITH THE
AUTHORIZED ECONOMY STANDARDS

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1938

July 25 A full day :
Monday.

- 9.0 to 11.0. Titivate *Ego* 3 and my pot-boiler to be called *Bad Manners*.
- 11.0 „ 12.30. Write 1000 words for *Ego* 4.
- 12.30 „ 2.0. Dictate 1000 words for my next pot-boiler, provisionally called *Women Never Play Fair*.
- 2.0 „ 2.30. Lunch.
- 2.30 „ 3.0. Arrange for temp. chauffeur, Charles having been hit in chest by starting-handle just as I am leaving for alleged holiday.
- 3.0 „ 7.45. Read four books. Write 1250 words for *Daily Express*. Slog out to
- 8.15 „ 10.45. Richmond Theatre. This is what Basil Macdonald Hastings called being the dramatic critic for Asia Minor.
- 10.45 „ 11.15 Slog back again
- 11.15 „ 12.45. Café Royal.
- 12.45 „ 2.45. Consider and dictate to late-working Jock matter for to-morrow's speech at the Manchester Grammar School prize-giving, where I am to hand out the books.
- 3.0. Bed.

July 26 Another full day :
Tuesday.

- 7.0. Get up
- 8.0. Start to motor to Manchester.
- 12.15. Arrive Manchester. Change togs, lunch, rewrite speech, and
- 2.30. Shake hands with 200 boys, give them their prizes, and deliver speech.
- 4.30. Start for Whitby.
- 7.30. Arrive Whitby.

July 27 According to the M.G., my speech went down
Wednesday. all right. Long report and short appreciative
 leader. It was not the first time I had spoken
 from the Free Trade Hall platform. At the Speech Day of
 1896 I mounted those steps to recite Don Diègue's great speech
 from *Le Cid*. This raised a tremendous laugh, because, like
 Sarah Bernhardt on her visit to London in 1879, I began
 on too high a note. Yesterday I told the boys how in
 that hall I remembered hearing Joe Chamberlain deliver his
 famous "pin-prick" speech. And how he said, "Will the
 young gentleman sitting on the fifth ventilator on my right
 kindly get down?" And how I had been that young gentle-
 man! When they sang *Forty Years On* I wasn't nearly so
 much moved as I expected to be. Forty-three years ago I
 howled at the notion of what it would be like to come
 back in forty years. Lo and behold, yesterday afternoon I
 felt nothing, except for a twinge when the High Master called
 me "sir."

July 28 I refuse to touch pageants with barge-poles, even
Thursday. if it be an authentic pole out of the actual barge
 that took King John to Runnymede. How can
 those be Hengist and Horsa when we know them to be young
 Mr Pepper and young Mr Salt, the obliging assistants from
 the local grocer's? How can yonder stout party hope to
 be Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough—"His Grace returned
 from the wars this morning and pleased me twice in his
 top-boots"—when we know her to be the vicar's sister and
 quite unpleasurable? Pageants are permissible only when
 everybody is pageanting and nobody is looking on. I do
 not deny their utility in so far as the pageanteers are con-
 cerned. They resolve complexes and release inhibitions. They
 satisfy the Snittle Timberry in us. What all this means is
 that I have just come back from Scarborough's open-air
 Pageant of Tannhäuser, acted in the middle of a lake. I sat
 in the front row with my feet almost in the water, and enjoyed
 it very much.

July 29 Motoring with my brother Harry, who is warding
Friday. off a nervous breakdown, the result of over-work.

Lunthed at the King's Head at Darlington. A very sound hotel. Good, plain food with excellent coffee, well served, by a pretty, shy, efficient young woman. Thence to Wensley, where I was in camp in 1915. Not a sign of there ever having been camp or war.

Visited the antique shop at Leyburn where there is an admirable private museum, though I am by nature sceptical about such things as "Fragment of Hotspur's Skull." Bought a "View of Antigua on Ivory," which I sent to Hermione Baddeley, because of her song about Antigua in the revue at the Little Theatre; a picture on glass of a "Balloon Ascent from Kenilworth," which Monty Shearman would give hundreds for if it were by a French impressionist and *not* on glass; a Staffordshire John Milton, which I may give to Jock; and a sedan chair eight inches high with carved ivory panels, bevelled glass windows, and containing a tiny liqueur bottle. This I shall certainly keep for myself. All for £2 5s. Noted a piece of wood, the size and shape of a large olive, attached to four inches of leather thong. The assistant not knowing what this was, Harry said with authority, "It's a Roman uvula-polisher, fourth century." Harry pretends that when he passed the shop after tea the polisher was in the window duly labelled as such. Together with the words, "Very fine specimen."

On the top of a particularly lonely moor passed a little pub at which, on a cycling tour five years ago, Harry and a friend stopped for a drink. The pub, he told me, had seemed deserted. They knocked on the counter, and, as nobody came, knocked again. Then the landlord appeared and said, "Sorry to keep you gentlemen waiting. My wife has just died." I insisted on going in. No customers, and nobody behind the bar. Only a black cat sitting on the counter, and nothing to be heard but the tick of an invisible clock. I rapped, and nobody came. I was about to rap again, when I noticed that Harry had already got back into the car. I followed him.

Harry told me that in connection with a slum-clearance

scheme last winter he came across a room which ran over five cottages. None of the tenants below had ever bothered about it, and one said that so far as he knew the room was empty and had been for years, the property having changed hands half a dozen times, and successive landlords losing sight of the garret. On the door being forced it revealed itself as a joiner's workshop. The tools were neatly arranged on the bench. On a peg hung a working jacket. Dust everywhere. The calendar on the wall bore the date August 10, 1914.

Aug. 7 Sunday. Last week was the first time I had attended the Malvern Festival. Although I had heard frightful accounts of previous years, I had no notion that it could be such a bore. This year it took place in a heat wave, and the moment the day became bearable was the moment for shutting oneself up in what must be one of the hottest theatres in Europe. Playhouses whose aim is to ventilate modern opinion should begin by ventilating themselves: a sure way to stifle thought is to asphyxiate the thinker.

As a relief from the dull strenuousness Peter Page, Bertie van Thal, and I sneaked off after the Wednesday matinée to Birmingham, where Seymour Hicks was playing. After the theatre we bore him off to supper at the Queen's Hotel, where Peter told us a yarn which he protested was true. He was on a cruise, and the boat stopped at a tiny islet in the Marquesas, visited every five years or so. Going ashore, he encountered on the beach a youth wearing nothing but a pair of soiled shorts. Peter told him in his best French all about the Atlantic flights of Hughes and Corrigan. "I suppose," he added, "in view of your isolation, you must find it a great treat to talk to anybody?" The young man, who had done nothing but stare, said in broad Cockney, "I don't know wot you're talking abaht. I'm a steward on B deck."

Next day I took Peter and Bertie to a tiny country show, at which we made friends with two charming little girls aged about eight and ten. When Ego came into the ring they said, "Nice horse!" When the other animals entered they said,

"Nasty horse!" "Ugly horse!!" "Silly horse!!!" And they clapped so hard that Ego won. Their mother asking me if a show Hackney was worth a lot of money, I said, "Dear lady, I would swop my animal for your two little girls. But not for one of them."

After which back to the treadmill again, something relieved by golf. The *Daily Telegraph* (Darlington) and *Evening News* (Bergel) challenged the *Observer* (Ivor Brown) and the *Sunday Times* (J.A.). The challengers won by two matches to one, helped by appalling play by me, and in spite of the fact that most of Bergel's tee-shots finished in the whins at silly short-leg! His drive has gone to pieces, largely through having more hinges in it than a sardine tin. But he could always play his iron shots, and his never-ending chatter must be worth at least two holes to his side.

The only good thing that has come out of Malvern so far as I am concerned is a highly intelligent young man by the name of John Irwin, who looks exactly like Stephen Haggard, and is tackling dramatic criticism on resources consisting of unlimited confidence and fourpence in cash. He is to return with me to Villa Volpone and understudy Jock, who is going to Dublin for the Abbey Theatre Festival.

Aug. 22. The Coliseum's reversion to *Variety* reminds me
Monday. of Sarah Bernhardt's first reaction to the proposal that she should appear on the halls: "Between monkeys, not!"

Aug. 23 Sibelius night at the Proms. The *Tempest* Prelude
Tuesday. is the very genius of storm, the gale on a rock-bound coast, the roar of breakers, the howl and sob of the wind, the scream of sea-birds. You just don't believe the orchestra is using ordinary instruments and notes. The equivalent in sound of

The sky, it seems, would pour down stinking pitch,
But that the sea, mounting to the welkin's cheek,
Dashes the fire out.

I found myself wondering whether, after such unleashing of the elements, our advocates for modern-dress Shakespeare would still want to see Miranda in beach-pyjamas and beret chatting to a Prospero in mackintosh and sou'wester. Coming out, I heard one sweet young thing say to another, "My dear, I just can't cope with Sibelius." I know how I should cope with this young lady. I should bastinado her with flutes, box her ears with cymbals, and lash her with a cat-o'-nine-tails made out of the strings of double-basses.

Sept. 9 Sixty-one to-day. Jock keeps my birthday with his
Friday. usual charm, wit, and unexpectedness. This is the
fourth day he has shut himself up in his flat with the
index to *Ego* 3, as the result of which I do not see him. But
I hear from him. At eleven roses arrive. At three o'clock
comes a record of Scriabin's Sonata No. 4 in F sharp major,
Op. 30. This is followed at seven by Antoine's *Mes Souvenirs
sur le Théâtre-Libre*. I can see that this last gift is going to keep
me up half the night.

Sept. 14 War scare. At 2 A.M. this morning I was awakened
Wednesday. by the hoarse cry of a newsboy. I was glad I did
not miss that cry, it gave me a thrill of excitement
the like of which I had not experienced for twenty-four years.
I was *not* glad the newsboy was crying war news. I *was* glad
I did not miss the excitement.

Sept. 15 Mr Chamberlain has flown to Germany to see
Thursday. Hitler.

Sept. 24 Nine days of one crisis after another. This afternoon
Saturday. a middle-aged gentlewoman looking like a character
in a Dodie Smith play acted by Muriel Aked called
to measure me for my gas-mask. She expressed herself as quite
ready to be killed at her job: "How can man die better than
facing fearful odds? Lord Macaulay, you know. I learned that
verse when I was a girl. Still quite apt, don't you think?"

Sept. 26 Started to make a dug-out in the back garden. Not *Monday.* a man to be had in the Labour Exchanges, so Fred Leigh, two of his ex-music-hall friends, and the temporary chauffeur have started in.

If there is going to be another war what about slogans? Let other nations keep their peckers up with invocations to the spirits of patriotism and glory. For the phlegmatic Englishman "Business as usual" is still the best slogan. That is why I motored to-night to Banbury, to open an Academy of Dramatic Elocution presided over by Shayle Gardner. (That the mood is general was proved when, on going this afternoon into a shop to inquire about oilskins for protection against mustard-gas, I saw a young man trying on a top-hat.) After the lecture I was taken to supper at the White Lion. Old-school host, lively modern hostess, ferociously intelligent daughter, très Bloomsbury. Inn full of antiques with sixty Windsor chairs picked up at anything from half a crown to thirty bob. South Kensington once offered a hundred pounds a chair for the collection, and America an open cheque. Both offers refused. Returning, saw first lot of soldiers constructing something by the roadside shortly after one, and a second lot at Uxbridge just before two. Eerie and unbelievable.

Sept. 27 Aubrey Hammond at lunch read a letter from his *Tuesday.* brother saying that the British Consul had advised him to leave Paris. The launching of the *Queen Elizabeth* by the Queen at Glasgow gets one-twentieth of the space in the papers it would normally get.

Bought a substitute for cellophane paper, all the stocks of the real thing being sold out. This is for making a gas-proof room indoors. Discovered this afternoon that all the bags for sand have also gone. Fred Leigh knowing a girl at the grocer's, we have got sugar-bags, to be cut up and made the right size. Slogan about business as usual is weakening! Have postponed trying on my new suit in spite of Hector Powe's advertisement in to-night's *Evening Standard*: "The tonic of new clothes will be greater now than at any other time within recent memory."

Cannot make up my mind whether I ought to volunteer for something, and, if so, what.

Everybody remembers the Russian troops which during the last war passed through England without anybody seeing them, though everybody knew somebody who saw them. In the first interval of to-night's new play, *Official Secret*, Charles Morgan told me that his stockbroker's brother had arrived this afternoon from Berlin with the news that anti-war rioting had broken out on a colossal scale. Then what about the marvellous boy, locked away and carefully guarded, who has discovered a ray which will turn the petrol in the tanks of *enemy* aeroplanes to water?

I hereby propound what I venture to call Agate's Theory of War Rumours: Whenever in war-time a thing is desirable and feasible the rumour will go round that it has occurred, and will obtain credence among intelligent and stupid alike. Whenever a thing is desirable and infeasible the rumour that it has occurred will obtain credence among the vulgar only.

Sept. 28 Great difficulty in procuring corrugated-iron sheets
Wednesday. for the dug-out. Got the last six in the neighbourhood.

The warning not to dance in gas-proof rooms during a raid is not as unnecessary as it sounds, and to ask how people could do such a thing is just foolish. Of course they would do it! I should probably try to keep a grip on myself by turning on the gramophone, and I recognise the existence of the half-witted to whom dancing means what music means to me. The way people are taking things provides the most astonishing contrasts. While I am feverishly turning my back garden into a credible imitation of Flanders my neighbour mows his lawn!

Sept. 30 The crisis came to an end at 12.30 A.M. to-day, when
Friday. Hitler, Mussolini, Daladier, and Chamberlain reached an agreement. I cannot help it if the last reminds me of Dickens's General Choke: "'We are a new country, Sir,' observed the General. 'Man, Sir, here is man in all his dignity.

Here am I, Sir,' said the General setting up his umbrella to represent himself—and a villainous-looking umbrella it was, a very bad counter to stand for the sterling coin of his benevolence—' here am I with grey hairs, Sir, and a moral sense ! ' ”

Oct. 7 Of the sane things which have happened during the
Friday. past fortnight I remember chiefly the Henry Wood Jubilee Concert at the Albert Hall. This was like the Scotsman's description of a singed sheep's head, "a deal o' fine, confused feeding." Garnishings of Bach, Beethoven, Handel, and Wagner to honour two noble modern English dishes of Bax and Vaughan Williams, with Sullivan and Elgar to take off the covers and put them on again. As a sweet, Rachmaninoff in person handed round his C minor piano concerto. Odd thing about these mammoth concerts and mammoth halls—the four orchestras and four choirs seemed to make less noise than one orchestra and one choir at the Queen's Hall. On the other hand, the *pianissimo* passages were most effective. Our old friend, the echo, was in great form, and there was a moment when one feared that the Valkyries going might collide with the Valkyries coming back. The ensuing party at Grosvenor House was extremely gay. I sat between Violet Vanbrugh, still divinely tall and still divinely fair, and her sister Irene, whose stage radiance is but a pale reflection of her natural self. Irene wore a dress of a shade subtly compounded of pillar-box, vermilion, and lobster, because, as she very rightly said, "If you're going to wear a red frock take care that it's redder than any other frock in the room." At the same table were Moiseiwitsch, grave and unbending with a mask like a sphinx playing poker, and his exquisitely pretty wife, who possesses that rare thing among Russians—vivacity. Then the Hambourgs. Dolly Hambourg told me how they had that day flown from Ireland. The plane had risen to 10,000 feet to avoid the gale, and then, getting ice on its wings, had come down to within 400 feet of the Irish Sea. Neither she nor her husband had flown before. "I went with Mark because I thought he might be nervous. But the pilot said afterwards that what made the

plane rock was not the weather, but Mark's jokes!" Mark did not hear this because he was describing to the table how he had seen a kettle-drummer at the other end of the room eating cold chicken with two forks, and out of habit drumming between mouthfuls! A great gathering in honour of Henry, a man who has done more for music in England than anybody else, including doubling the wages of orchestral players.

Oct. 17 Postcard from Brother Edward :
Monday.

I hear that, during the recent crisis, on moving a chest at No. 10 Downing Street containing armistice proposals, peace treaties, disarmament memoranda, and other bellicose phantasmagoria they found—a dart-board!

Oct. 19 It's an ill wind, etc. Met John Irwin to-day, who
Wednesday. tells me that at the height of the crisis he blew into the office of the *New Statesman* and found everybody too much unnerved to sit in a theatre or hold a pen afterwards. Whereby he applied for, and was immediately given, a job as dramatic critic.

Oct. 22 Fred insisted on going on with the dug-out, which
Saturday. is now finished. Its internal measurements are fifteen feet long by six feet wide by eight feet high. Concreted one foot thick throughout, with concrete roof and five foot of clay on top. Cost £100.

Oct. 27 *Ego* 3 published.
Thursday.

Nov. 1 No. 1 of my *Nouveaux Contes Scabreux*. The model, of
Tuesday. course, is Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's *Nouveaux Contes Cruels*: At a banquet given to celebrate the award of the Order of Merit the octogenarian recipient makes a speech in which he boasts that he has always discarded his mistresses as soon as they arrived at the age of consent.

Nov. 2 Set out for a short lecture tour in Southport and
 Wednesday. neighbourhood with Leo Pavia, who held forth
 at length on inaccuracies in the musical world. For example, Johann Strauss's opérette is called not *Der Waldmeister*, but *Waldmeister*. This means not *The Forest Ranger*, but *Woodruff*, which is a sweet-scented herb. The whole point of the opérette, says Leo, is concerned with the effect of the herb on the characters, whom it makes dance. Leo was present at the first performance in Vienna in the late 'nineties, and saw the old man conduct the Overture.

Southport fascinates me. It was here that I first saw *The School for Scandal*, wore my first London-made suit, and had my first semi-serious illness, a fierce attack of tonsillitis, not improved when the young and pretty night-nurse jumped into bed with me, starched cuffs and all, and stayed there. I was nineteen, and such a hellish little prig that next morning I begged the doctor to send her away! My lecture on Bad Manners took place in the Congregational Church. It went off fairly well, though I hadn't reckoned on delivering it from the pulpit. Audience composed of pigtailed schoolgirls, grinning school-boys, and several hundred stolid burgesses with their wives.

Nov. 3 Same lecture to the members of the St Anne's
 Thursday. Women's Luncheon Club. Went much better

• • The worst part of lecturing is afterwards. (I see to it that there is no before!) When I've given my performance it's over. "Jetzt hab' ich euch eine Kunst gegeben," as Wagner said at Bayreuth. I work like a horse to entertain the audience *as an audience*; as individuals and total strangers they don't interest me, and I hate being on show. Churlish? Not at all. I just haven't the talent for basking.

Nov. 4 Still at Southport. Had the car driven half a mile
 Friday. along the sands in search of the sea. Couldn't go farther because of quicksands, but still no sign of the ocean. Watched the antics of a seagull which kept on picking up a shell, dropping it from a height, and swooping down to

see if the plan for getting at the inmate had succeeded. After a time I shoo'd the bird away, and, picking up the shell, saw a quivering red object like a pistil. I wonder whether Wells is right in saying that low organisms, having neither emotions nor memory, are equally unable to enjoy pleasure or suffer pain. A few yards away two louts were digging for sand-worms, which they found at a depth of *sixty* inches. Some of the worms are eighteen inches long, and they showed me sections of nine or ten inches from which they had removed the stomachs, or whatever it is worms have. So treated, the sections are dried in sawdust, and continue to live for ten days and still be good bait for fluke and whiting. I have never seen anything so horrible since I saw a man on Southend pier baiting his line with pieces of live crab. "Pity," says Wells, "is as much wasted on a crab or lobster as on a fluttering leaf." I wonder!

Nov. 5 Motored to Windermere and decided that I am
Saturday. like Wordsworth, who, according to Miss Mitford, expected his admirers to "admire *en masse*—all, every page, every line, every word, every comma, to admire nothing else, and to admire all day long."

Nov. 6 Leo sat in the car for fifty miles without speaking,
Sunday. and with the face of a soured, elderly tart. Then he broke silence: "You know, of course, James, that my maternal grandmother and Sarah Bernhardt's mother were sisters. What you don't know is that one of my aunts was a *grande amoureuse* in the eighteenth-century connotation of that phrase. She died when she was nearly seventy, and left £69,000 to the ex-billiard-marker whom she had divorced and then re-married twenty years later!" I asked him what will happen to the Jews if and when neither Fascist nor Communist countries will harbour them, and the democratic countries do not easily tolerate them. Leo said, "There has always been somewhere for us to go; we have always been in the van of culture; we have always had our behinds kicked. There will *always* be somewhere for us to go; we shall *always* be in the

van of culture; and we shall *always* have our behinds kicked." Later, in the lounge of a Birmingham hotel, I met a strictly Aryan magnate. We agreed about the absence of ventilation, the smallness of the writing-room, the exorbitant price of everything. He said he was Sir Biggles Wade, or some such name, and inquired mine. This meaning nothing to him, I added, "Theatres." He said, "A long-haired fellah came into lunch just now. Looked like a fiddler. Who would that be?" I said, "Probably Paganini." He said, "Damned interesting!" And I reflected that there will always be an English county for him to live in, that in the matter of world culture he will always be in the rear, and that he left Eton and Balliol in the tranquil consciousness that never again on this side of the grave would he have his behind kicked.

Nov. 23 Dined in Albany with Clifford Bax, Meum Stewart, *Wednesday.* and another guest, one Denzil Batchelor, a very clever, fat young poet, who is C. B. Fry's Jock and one of the finest talkers I have ever met. But we all twinkled a bit. Clifford is ascending to higher and higher spheres. He made three separate allusions to his conversion to Buddhism. I think he fancies he *is* Buddha.

Nov. 24 I am made melancholy by the death of Peter *Thursday.* Ridgeway at the age of forty-four. He was the kind of actor who illustrates the strength of weakness. So too did *Charles and Mary*, the play about the Lambs in which he made his reputation. It is a minor miracle that the play ever came to be written, and when written, produced. But the thing happened. For once in a way the key fitted the lock, and this odd, shy little actor, who was reduced to playing stammerers because of ill-health and defective memory, came to personify that other little stammerer. The reincarnation of Charles was a miracle of lifelikeness, tenderness, and sensibility. Now Ridgeway ought never, in this prosaic world, to have been an actor at all. First newsboy, then coffee-shop attendant, he asked and didn't take Matheson Lang's advice, joined an inferior

touring company, failed, thought of becoming a monk, joined up in the War, helped at Toc H, studied for the priesthood, learned his job as an actor in Sybil Thorndike's company, started the Players' Theatre in Covent Garden, made and kept it gay, and in the heart of Lamb's own London *was* Charles Lamb. His unremarked career was a tiny edifice of which any stone might at any moment have given way. Yet poetic justice arranged that it had its tiny crown and was as complete as it ever could have been.

Nov. 25 Luncheon party at the Garrick to Hamish Hamilton,
Friday. off to America. Actually it was H. H.'s party, given to see himself off. A wonderfully good host with a gift for blending guests. Clockwise: Hamish, Jock, Jimmie Horsnell, Cyril Lakin, Lord Moore, Arthur Bryant, Ivor Brown, J. B. Priestley, Harold Dearden, Frank Swinnerton, J. A., Eddie Marsh. Eddie told us of a magnificent rebuke to a late-comer at a luncheon party, the host being Lord Brougham and the guest a famous society leader arriving half an hour late and pleading she had been buying a chandelier. Lord B., looking straight ahead, said, "I once knew a man who bought a chandelier *after* luncheon."

Nov. 26 E. A. Baughan, who died to-day at the age of
Saturday. seventy-three, was a "safer" critic even than Darlington, which is like suggesting a safer safe than Chubb's. Never spectacularly right, he was never wrong. His defect was over-modesty in print; you looked in vain next morning for the trenchant things he had said in the foyer the night before. Universally liked and respected.

Nov. 28 Supped last night *chez* Clive Morton, the actor.
Monday. His nimble-witted wife, Joan Harben, overheard this in Oxford Street last week:

MOTHER (*to small son*). You naughty boy! Whatever made you do it to Grandma? In a shop, too, with everybody looking.
 SMALL SON (*sullenly*). I 'ad to!

Lunched at Madeleine Cohen's. James Whale was there, full of stories about Mrs Pat. How she said to him, "You are a wonderful producer. Nobody else could have made me look like a little, old, bow-windowed chest of drawers!" And how she threw away thirty dollars on a telephone call from New York to Hollywood just to say, "I've had a cable from England. They want me to play Oscar Wilde."

Dec. 7 My boyhood's passion was cricket. (I still have *Wednesday*. a nightmare about playing for Lancashire and missing catch after catch in the long field.) A year or two ago I received a letter from K. J. Key, the Surrey crack of those days. I wrote in reply that if he had sent me that or any letter fifty years ago I should have dropped dead with ecstasy.

I told this to C. B. Fry, when I met him to-night at dinner at Clifford Bax's. Clifford wanted to talk about fifteenth-century Italy, Fry about the theatre, and I about cricket. We talked about cricket. Fry, alluding to man's universal desire to shine at something else, said: "I always wanted to be a minor poet. I remember when I did my record long jump saying to myself when I was in the air half-way, 'This may be pretty good jumping. It's dashed poor minor poetry!'"

It was an exciting evening. To the great danger of some priceless *bric-à-brac* the man who had been among the six best batsmen of his time illustrated some of the strokes of the old masters, and some modern failings. Pressed as to the world's greatest batsman, he declined to compare Grace, the giant English yeoman wielding a battleaxe, with Ranjitsinhji, the princely master of the foil. But he definitely thought Ranji the harder to get out, and in his mind the unspoken order seemed to be Ranji, Grace, Trumper, Bradman, Hobbs. He also said that the secret of Jessop's marvellous quickness lay in the fact that he was double-jointed all over. About the mentality of all cricketers: "If they were mice you wouldn't be able to teach them the way to their holes!" When I asked what bowler he had been most afraid of he replied, "Lockwood, of Surrey.

He was a fast bowler with the flight of a slow one. No other man could ever deceive me with the same ball twice running. When Lockwood got me out I felt that, if I had the stroke all over again, the result must be the same ! ”

Fry also told us this extraordinary thing : On the day E. V. Lucas died Lady W——, who was lunching at Lord’s, pointed to the door and said, “ Look, there’s E. V. going out ! ” Everybody looked, and there was nobody. She said afterwards that she saw E. V. quite clearly, and that he got smaller and smaller.

Dec. 13 Brother Edward scalps *Ego* 3 :

Tuesday.

12 Huron Road, S.W. 17

Dec. 12, '38

MY DEAR JAMES,

I find, in your *Ego* 3, the same eminent quality of readability, the same remarkable zest for life, and the same vulgarity which characterised the two earlier volumes. Where you have improved, however, is in the exploitation of a keener mordancy of wit ; and a promise that, perhaps, some day, your mind will grow up. There is, as usual, far too much about food, drink, and the prices thereof ; which narration, though it may tickle the palates of the rich, is apt to get up the noses of the poor.

And your friends ! And your bedlamite behaviour ! These peregrinations into inaccessible spots by motor-car, at dead of night ; this invention of parlour-games ; this flirting with phobias. You and your friends remind me of a disused pack of cards—all knaves and jokers ; and their proceedings take me back to *Boward et Pécuchet*, with a touch of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* thrown in.

Still, as I saw that Lyons’ awarded you their weekly cake, I suppose it’s all right.

Now, shall we examine the work a little more closely ?

P. 20. “ From whence.” If Mr Cardus had pleaded a precedent in Psalm 121 I suppose C. P. Scott would have retorted, “ King David would not have used it twice in my Bible.”

P. 30. A most excellent photo of you. More lord than Lonsdale !

But what happened to your teeth on p. 244 ? Did

they move? And Dame Marie looks exactly like Puss about to sneeze.

P. 83. You think you would like a little of Lord Alfred Douglas quite a lot. Is it possible his lordship would like a lot of J. A. quite a little?

P. 87. Don't bother your head about Metaphysics! They are for the super-brains of the world, not the supper-brains.

P. 163. What a get-up! Combination of commissionaire and gymnasium-instructor. Where did you think you were bound for? Eel-Pie Island?

EDWARD

Dec. 15 Two more of my *Nouveaux Contes Scabreux*. All
Thursday. I can say about No. 2 is that the hero is a boastful
 fellow called Onanias. No. 3 is about an actress
so much in love with her understudy that on the first night of
the new play she feigns illness!

Dec. 17 Before going down to correct my proofs at the
Saturday. S.T. squeezed in a performance of the *Messiah*.
 Or, rather, Beecham squeeze it in for me. I thought
he over-Mozartified it. The soloists were not a patch on the
singers of my youth—Alban, with a bosom like the prow of a
battleship; Ada Crossley, an obvious victim to the inferiority
complex common to contraltos; Edward Lloyd, with his
waxed moustache and what I always took to be a wig; and that
tottering old lion Santley, with the roar reduced to a bark and
only the style left.

Dec. 20 Supper at the Villa Volpone. A. E. W. Mason,
Tuesday. Monty Shearman, Moiseiwitsch and his wife, Helen
 Haye, Violet Vanbrugh, Mary Hutchinson, Lord
Sandwich. Very gay.

Dec. 21 At Eiluned Hendrey's Christmas lunch to-day
Wednesday. met Max Beerbohm for the first time, and had
 all my illusions magnified. Asked why he cartooned
no more, he said, "One should be impertinent only to one's

elders, and I have none ! ” Jock was there too, and we have agreed that to put any of the talk on to paper would be to spoil it. It was a perfect couple of hours, with the principal guest as chattersome when launched as he was chary of being launched. But perhaps the last convolution in the complicated art of good conversation is for the best talker to suggest that he is being drawn out.

Dec. 28 No. 4 in my *Nouveaux Contes Scabreux*. The last *Wednesday*. minutes of a dipsomaniac who, on hearing his own death-rattle, orders the watchers by the bedside to send that damned snake away.

Dec. 30 At this time of year I always find myself taking up *Friday*. Balzac. I sat late last night re-reading *Splendeurs et Misères*, and, as always, enormously struck by the scene in which the Baron Nucingen pays court to Esther Gobseck. “Aime-t-on d’amour une femme qu’on achète ?” the poor girl asks, and receives the astonishing reply: “Choseffe ha pien édé fentu bar ses vrères à gausse de sa chantillesse. C’esde tans la Piple. T’ailliers, tans l’Oriende, on agéde ses phâmmes léchidimes.” This suggests a *Conte Scabreux* entitled *Incident at Villa Volpone*. But in some *future* volume, because I am only sixty-one, and Nucingen was sixty-six !

For years I have been trying to find the right place in which to say something wildly counter to received opinion. This is that after middle age only impermissible couplings are allowable. Elderly fribble and chorus-girl, matron and gigolo—these *liaisons* are not wholly disgusting, since youth has some part in them, even if it is compensated youth. But that a man in his sober sixties should contemplate relationship with the bouncing fifties revolts me.

1939

Jan. 2 Brother Edward starts the New Year with a p.c.
Monday:

From a local newsagent's window :

"Nice unfurnished Bed-sitting room to be let for Gentleman newly decorated."

(Oh, these New Year Honours !)

Jan. 10 Everybody is talking about Henry Ainley's return
Tuesday. to the microphone as Jean Valjean in *Les Misérables*.

He was in admirable voice on Sunday, they say. My sister May has often made me laugh at something which happened at Leeds during the tour of *Prince Fazil*. Harry, who is fond of his joke, said to May, who was playing the duenna : "One night, Miss Agate, in the scene in which you warn my wife against me, I shall not come on when you say, 'And besides . . .' I shall wait in the wings and see how you fill in !" Nothing happened until Friday. "And besides . . ." said May. No Harry. May tapped her forehead. Harry stood grinning in the wings. "I've got it !" said May. "I've remembered what I was going to say. I have to warn you that your husband is very fond of amateur theatricals. *And he's a very bad actor !*" On bounded Prince Fazil, and never again was May allowed to get as far as "And besides . . ." !

Jan. 19 Can nothing be done about these ridiculous first-
Thursday. night scenes after the fall of the curtain ? At the Shaftesbury to-night, after a tepid thriller, there appeared from nowhere a tall, thin gentleman, followed by a short, round gentleman, followed by a large, beaming gentleman who proceeded to kiss everybody's hand. None of these had been called for by the audience, which had not the vaguest notion who any of them was. The result of all this fuss is the elaborate destruction of whatever has been achieved. How

tolerate a stammering mooncalf whose trousers are as much too short as his acts have been too long? Why must Joan descend from her pyre to tell us that our reception has made her feel hot all over?

I think perhaps I should allow playwrights to *apologise*, and here is a speech which might serve as model:

Ladies and Gentlemen: Whilst thanking you for the magnificent reception you have given my play, I can only express astonishment that you should not have hissed it. Had you the brains to perceive it, you would know that my piece is impudently bad from start to finish; indeed, I have never known a more talentless piece of hack-work offered to an uncritical public. It is only because managers realise your lack of critical faculty that this worthless rubbish has been placed before you, in the belief that your colossal ignorance and obscene stupidity will make it the usual phenomenal success. Ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the company, I thank you.

Jan. 20 Musical criticism as it is written to-day :
Friday.

The gentleman in Strauss's *Death and Transfiguration* was like Charles I [*sic*] in that he took an unconscionable time a-dying. Not even Bruno Walter's transfiguring genius last night could remove the odour of corruption from this nasty necrophilous music.

S. F., in the "Daily Herald"

Jan. 21 The remodelled *Paprika*, now called *Magyar Melody*,
Saturday. began again last night. *Plus ça change* . . . I cannot conceive what Offenbach, Meilhac and Halévy, Hortense Schneider, and the old Bouffes Parisiens would have made of this modern witlessness. The best of the show was less good than third-rate Coward, and I yawned so much that my spectacles fell into the lap of a lady sitting in the stall behind me.

Jan. 27 "Amid the mortifying circumstances attendant upon
Friday. growing old," wrote Lamb, "it is something to have seen the *School for Scandal* in its glory." Similarly I shall say that it is something to have beheld *The Playboy of the*

pathos than any actress I ever saw ; Courtenay Thorpe, who first took me to supper at her house, always said she was exceeded in emotional power only by the American actress Clara Morris. Her Mrs Ballard in McEvoy's play, Mrs Borridge in *The Cassilis Engagement*, Mrs Clegg in *Jane Clegg*, Mrs Midget in *Outward Bound*, and the mother in *Time to Wake Up* were all shattering performances. Her line was good-natured, querulous old women of the lower middle-classes with a soft spot that became an all-engulfing quicksand. She would have been the perfect Mrs Cluppins, and her Mistress Quickly was never approached in my time. Clare had much greater strength of character than her stage impersonations suggested. She had a crab-apple quality, and was generous without being a fool. It was a rule with us never to meet, in theatre, restaurant, or street, without a good old-fashioned hug.

Feb. 21 Eleven o'clock last night found me alone in a strange *Tuesday*. flat in Marylebone playing early Beethoven sonatas, very badly, on a magnificent Bechstein, and with a bottle of champagne at my elbow ! I had met Alfred Chenhalls and his wife at the L.S.O. Concert at the Queen's Hall, and they had asked me in on their way to a party to which they went after making me comfortable. A. C. is a tall, elegant man with a baldish, slightly egg-shaped head—a Micawber for whom things turn up. He is an accountant, and out of the goodness of his heart has offered to put my affairs in order for me.

Feb. 26 Charles Morgan having praised Priestley for aiming *Sunday*. at the skies in *Johnson over Jordan* instead of at some earth-bound mark, I counter in the *S.T.* with a pastiche of Browning :

EPITAPH ON AN ARCHER AIMING HIGH BUT WIDE

You say his aim was noble ; here's my hand.
 That arrow's gold which scorns to hit the target ;
 'All Golden Arrow trippers understand
 'Tis better to miss Naples than hit Margate.

Feb. 27 Sudden revolt from work. In the old days Jock and *Monday.* I used to have time for an occasional concert made out of gramophone records. For months past we have been so bullied and harassed and worried for articles that not a note has been heard. So to-day we struck, giving the house-boy orders to tell callers and duns to go to hell. After which we listened to the following carefully composed programme.

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| 1. Overture | <i>Donna Diana</i> | Reznicek |
| 2. "Wanderer" Fantasia for piano and orchestra | | Schubert-Liszt |
| 3. Overture | <i>The Corsair</i> | Berlioz |
| 4. Piano Solo | Ballade in F minor | Chopin |
| 5. Two Dances from <i>The Three-cornered Hat</i> | | de Falla |

And then resumed work, the 'phone having rung fourteen times.

Feb. 28 "Il était à craindre que *Le Misanthrope* n'ennuyât *Tuesday.* quelque peu son monde," wrote Sarcey of the piece chosen to usher in the visit to London of the Comédie Française in 1879. It was to be feared that Musset's *Le Chandelier* might bore some of the audience at last night's opening performance. It bored me. Stiff. I whispered to Jock, who was all *extasié*, that the generic name for Musset's weeping-willow heroes is Dick Sniveller. Afterwards to supper at the French Embassy, where everything was grand and gay.

March 2 To speak French in Paris at midnight is easier *Thursday.* than speaking it in London at midday. I was a little nervous, therefore, at the official luncheon given to the players of the Comédie Française by the Anglo-French Art and Travel Society when I found myself seated between Mme Bourdet, the wife of the director, and Mlle Madeleine Renaud, the leading actress. I think I got through

all right, thanks to Mlle Renaud's hat, an enchanting affair which, I told her, reminded me of the month of March saying in Gautier's poem, "Printemps, tu peux venir!" •Mme Bourdet asked whether witty impromptus come naturally to English dramatic critics, or have to be painfully worked up. And I was immensely pleased with my counter from Molière: "Les gens de qualité savent tout sans avoir jamais rien appris."

March 9 Cheltenham Races. Backed six losers. A contrast
Thursday. to yesterday, when George Wickens, the chauffeur, investing 7s. 6d. for me with his street bookie, turned it into £4 os. 5d. He had doubled up five animals with a horse called Litigant, and three of them won, as, of course, did Litigant also. It is an exciting thing to sit in a car, turn on the wireless, and hear a double come home. This, surely, is where television is going to come in. Being thoroughly greedy, I reflected that if George's stakes had been one of ten shillings instead of sixpence I should have made £80

March 10 The man Chenhalls is really extraordinary. When
Friday. he offered to get me out of my present mess I denied that it was possible, saying that all my resources were mortgaged up to the hilt. He laughed, and said, "My dear fellow, you don't know where the hilt is!"

March 11 Rachmaninoff recital at the Queen's Hall. The
Saturday. last word in piano-playing. The programme announced four Chopin studies, but I was conscious of a fifth—the expression on Moiseiwitsch's face! R. was the principal guest at the Savage Club dinner to-night, Benno presiding. As I was sitting in the angle of the T-table, within four feet of the chair, I had plenty of opportunity to study in Rachmaninoff that visual magnificence which comes naturally to great men like Irving and Chaliapin, to whose type this major artist belongs. It is an extraordinary mask, at once gentle and *faronche*, noble and melancholy. The result is

composite—majestic indifference oddly united to the questing look of a French actor strolling the boulevards. When the lean figure rose to leave, everybody in the room stood up. Apart from royalty, this has happened before at the Savage only in the cases of Irving and Lord Roberts.

March 12 Took the chair at the Annual Dinner of the Critics' *Sunday*. Circle. Not nervous, and my speech as good as any I have ever made. The guests were Tyrone Guthrie, Charles Laughton, Geoffrey Toye, Fay Compton, and Michael Redgrave. To the club for bridge afterwards, where Benno and my godson, Tony Baerlein, gave a good drubbing to George Bishop and me.

March 13 Reading Mrs Charles Calvert's *Sixty-eight Years on Monday*. *the Stage*, I came across a passage which is as true to-day as it was in 1866. She is relating how her husband, after three years of producing and playing Shakespeare at the Prince's Theatre, Manchester, decided not to renew his engagement: "I fancy that some of the directors were rather glad. They saw a chance of carrying on the Theatre in a way more in unison with their own tastes. Shakespeare was, to them, a bore. They would infinitely have preferred *The Girl Who Fell Down the Back Stairs*, or something of that edifying class of entertainment."

March 14 "Listen to this," said B., reading the paper at lunch. *Tuesday*. "Here's some silly ass of a Chinese philosopher who says the universe was made out of dragon's breath. Can you believe it?"

I said, "Easily. Only the other day you asked me to believe that a long time ago (you couldn't say how long) the universe created itself, or was created (you weren't certain which) out of nothing. Then as the result of something called Evolution (which you couldn't explain) we went to America in a steamboat, and we agreed, if you remember, that the stuff coming

out of the funnels was dragon's breath. No, I see nothing wrong with your Chinese philosopher."

B. "Then you believe that the moon is made of green cheese?"

J. A. "I do not. But I think it's highly probable that it's made of pink cheese. Anything is easier to believe than that the moon is just made of moon."

B. "And witch-doctors?"

J. A. "Of course! If you told me that I had perforated my infundibulum and should be dead within twenty-four hours I should certainly die in that time."

B. "And black magic?"

J. A. "Why harp on colour? What is snow but white magic? But we can cut all this short. I believe in everything except the credible."

All my life I have taken a great interest in conjuring. In fact, at Christmas parties I used to do a trick! Somebody would be made to choose the eight of hearts and the nine of spades—how I got them to pick these cards I can't remember—after which I would produce the nine of hearts and the eight of spades, saying, "Are these your cards, sir?" If the man said yes the trick was a success. If no I rapidly produced the Union Jack, and the turn was over. I once wrote to the Great Dante, saying, "Dear Sir, Re that trick in which you, being the barber, and your customer change places. It is obvious that at some moment you must be replaced by a double. If you don't want me to detect this moment you ought to buy your double a pair of patent-leather shoes as expensive and as shiny as your own." The Great Dante replied, "Dear Mr Agate, I have taken your advice. Come to-night and you will see that both of us are indistinguishably glossy."

Putting two and two together, it is obvious that I am a person with an astonishing capacity for belief, yet one who is at the same time extremely difficult to take in. In other words, the very person to accept Dr Tahra Bey's invitation to his platform at the Æolian Hall.

I was asked to write on a piece of paper the name of some

object in the hall which I should like him to touch. I wrote this down at a table in a far corner of the stage. Shielding the paper with my hand, I put what I had written into an envelope and sealed it, and gave it to an attendant, who held it in full view of the audience. Dr Tahra Bey then took me by the hand, and for five minutes conducted a frantic thought-reading search through the hall with me acting as his guide. He failed. I then said the object was my own cigar-case, which I had slipped into the pocket of the friend with me. This, of course, was B. The chairman intervened: "Mr Agate, you cannot have heard. While you were writing I announced that the object must not belong to the person assisting Tahra Bey." Whereupon the latter said to me in French, "Will you have the kindness to try another experiment immediately?" I agreed. Again Dr Tahra Bey took my hand, and this time led me at a gallop to the middle of the room, and at once put his hand on a lady's white shawl. My envelope being opened, the chairman read out, "The white shawl."

Of course, there may have been somebody looking through the black velvet curtains, and reading "white shawl" with the aid of Sam Weller's "pair o' patent double million magnifyin' gas microscopes of hextra power." Of course, there may have been somebody lying on a batten in the roof with an arrangement of mirrors and binoculars. Of course, the writing-table may have had transmitters which instantaneously reproduced my handwriting. Of course, all this Heath Robinsonian spying may have been telepathed to Dr Tahra Bey. I find the thought-reading explanation easier. Later I stood on the stage by the coffin in which Dr Tahra Bey was buried alive. It is possible that this had a false bottom. It is possible that the management of the Æolian Hall had permitted a trapdoor to be cut in its stage, and that during the eight minutes of his immuring Dr Tahra Bey was smoking a cigarette in the artists' room. I prefer to believe that Dr Tahra Bey is an Oriental endowed by nature with remarkable and extraordinary powers, though not infallible, which I should expect a conjurer to be. The fact that some of his experiments were

unsuccessful 'was to my mind a further indication of genuineness. B. agreed.

March 19 Sunday. War scare again. As a practical step towards resisting the German menace it is proposed to decorate Waterloo Bridge with the largest poster ever made. In favour, I understand, of "voluntary compulsion," the new cant phrase for conscription.

March 20 Monday. Inspected my dug-out, and found seven feet of water in it. At the club nothing talked of except the war scare. Exactly like General Pirpleton in *Mr Pepys's Diary of the War*, or whatever it was called. Here is some of the gossip. The hospitals have been told to prepare for 100,000 casualties during the first twenty-four hours of hostilities. We have something up our sleeve that the Germans don't know about. London and Paris will be roaring furnaces within a week. Our Air Force is twice the advertised size. G.H.Q. has removed to Bristol. We have bought Rumania's oil output for two years. Half the German tanks are cardboard. And so on and so forth.

March 22 Wednesday. After the theatre Bertie van Thal and Jock coaxed me to sup out of my usual orbit. They took me to the Moulin d'Or, next to Kettner's. Excellent. But what a trap for a critic! I had just been to see a screen flash-back of Sarah Bernhardt. "There," said I, in my loudish voice, "was a personality. You would have recognised Sarah at the bottom of a coal-mine. Modern actresses have no personality. I suppose I have seen Carol Goodner and Constance Cummings twenty times at least. But if they were to walk into this restaurant now I shouldn't be able to tell t'other from which!" Whereupon two ladies sitting at a table not two yards away, and whose beauty and charm I had already remarked, sat up like offended rattlesnakes. "Those," whispered Jock and Bertie simultaneously, "are Carol Goodner and Constance Cummings!"

March 23 This afternoon the B.B.C. faded out in the middle
Thursday. of the lovely Largo in Handel's *Music for the Royal*
Fireworks to permit of a tea-time talk on "Making
 the Most of your Looks." This began: "My talk this afternoon is on Deportment. First of all I want you to stand with your back to the wall—about half a yard distant—then step back against the wall. Now, girls, what part of you was the first to touch the wall? Tell me the truth! It was your behind, of course, and it ought to have been your shoulders!"

March 24 My investment of £10 on the Grand National resulted
Friday. in a profit of £24. Of this £12 10s. was a place double on Halcyon Gift, second in the Lincolnshire H'cap, and Workman, to-day's winner. If both horses had won I should have netted £200. However, £24 will do.

March 25 Took the odd £4 to Alexandra Palace, and came
Saturday. back with £8. Ought to have done better, as I backed four winners. It would have been *five* if George Wickens, who does my betting for me, had stuck to Victor Smyth's Selected in the third race. Unfortunately the look of some other animal unsettled him, and I gave way. He now agrees with me that the proper method of backing horses is the kitchen table, the midday *Star*, and a pin. As it's all bookmaker's money I am inclined to think George's stakes are too modest. "In gaming," said Jonathan Wild, "any man may be a loser who doth not play the whole game."

March 27 After Moiseiwitsch had performed at the Savage
Monday. Club dinner on Saturday night the Vice-Commodore of a famous yacht club said, "Is that fellah a professional?"

March 29 Dispersal sale of Henriques's stud of Hackneys.
Wednesday. They have given Nanette to George Lancaster, pensioned off Crusader, and retained only Viking, for stud purposes. Everybody there. I bought an exquisite

yearling filly by Viking. Bay, with two white feet, a lovely forehead, tail right on top of her back, and beautiful quality throughout. At twenty guineas Throup thinks this was the best and cheapest animal at the sale. It was the only one I wanted, Edgar in my opinion having bred mostly from the wrong mares. The fifty-five animals fetched £1989.

March 31 Called at Clare Greet's flat to choose "anything Friday. I liked among her personal belongings," in addition to her collection of theatrical autographs specifically left to me. I chose a set of old chairs.

Lawrence Anderson died this week. He had a magnificent voice, which he used with great effect as Brother Martin in *Saint Joan*. His performance in *Berkeley Square* was, to me, much more impressive than Leslie Howard's. But he could not wear modern clothes, a disability which he shared with many better actors, and perhaps with all romantic actors. Irving wearing a frock-coat *on the stage* resembled a seaside phrenologist, and Forbes-Robertson in a bowler suggested a hairdresser slipping out for lunch. Jack Anderson, togged up for a drawing-room comedy, looked like something in a wedding-group at Balham, and was very angry when I said so in print. A *bon viveur*, a good teller of longish stories, and a fine, adventurous spirit. He was handsome and had presence, as a nephew of Mary Anderson should. He was forty-six.

April 1 Went to the Plaza with George Mathew this afternoon and saw in contiguity a long, abject, stupefying inanity called *St Louis Blues* and an excellent, unostentatious film about a small-town doctor, called *A Man to Remember*. As we came out the newspaper placards had "Hitler's Speech." This was his reply to Chamberlain's announcement of this country's guarantee to Poland, and turned out to be the tamest thing in counterblasts. All the same, for the time being the war scare is over.

April 5 Having nothing to say on Sunday last, I wrote
Wednesday. my article in the form of a Walkley essay, intro-
 ducing words like "eptitude" and "scioness."
This morning I get an anonymous postcard :

Shade of Laurence Sterne to Shade of James Agate :
"I vow, sir, that what you wrote was vastly pretty. Pray,
what language did you call it?"

Decide to spend Easter in Paris doing nothing. B. goes with me to help. On the train run into Beaverbrook, who starts his old game of solicitous bullying. How old am I? Sixty-one. Strong? Strong. That's a pity, a strong man at sixty is inclined to overdo things. Why, if I have asthma, do I smoke? And so on and so forth. Suddenly, out of the blue, I hear, "You are a charming writer!" And I think of Hilary Jesson's sermon on throwing bones to promising young dogs. Pinero, of course.

April 6 Lunch in the Champs-Élysées. After lunch, as
Thursday. I dislike hot sun and B. likes it, we take our coffee
 at two separate brasseries, one on each side of the
Avenue, and communicate through the *chasseurs*. Dine at
Philippe's, in the Rue Daunou, and as we leave run into Beaver-
brook again. It seems we have chosen the right restaurant,
but the wrong hour, which should be *after* nine. The excuse
that we are going to the theatre is waved aside; why not a
cinema? None of this is said; I just sense it. After the play
B. and I—I mean B. and not Lord B.—make a tour of the Place
Blanche.

April 7 Propose going to a Wagner concert. B. says
Good Friday. we can hear Wagner in London; what about
 a film? I say we can see films in London, where-
upon B. collapses, and we go nowhere, except to a *boîte*, where
we are rewarded by the sight of Cécile Sorel sitting at a table
and looking like a drawing by Toulouse-Lautrec.

April 8 Dine with Beaverbrook at Larue's, the other
Saturday. guests being a tall man with spectacles and frizzy yellow hair whose name I don't catch,¹ and a young man called Lord Forbes. By the end of the meal I decided that Beaverbrook is seven men in one. The man of business, since he insists on knowing what the week-end traffic of Imperial Airways amounts to in cash; the idealist, for to him newspapers are something more than machines for making money; the dæmonist, since he is fascinated by the thing, whatever it was, which "possessed" E. V. Lucas; the dictator; the uncompromising realist; the fanatic, for though I don't gather what the fanaticism is about I recognise the gleam; the imp of mischief. Am struck, as always, by that brain considered purely as mechanism. Like Napoleon, its owner can do two things at once. I tested this to-night and found that while talking to Fuzzy-Wuzzy he had perfectly attended to what I was saying to the young lord. But it is a brain like a blow-lamp, going straight to the point and ignoring everything else. For example, he dismissed George Mair as an astonishingly competent journalist, not realising that he was a faun who lost his way.

April 9 To the Mathurins to see the Pitoëffs in
Easter Sunday, Tchekhov's *The Seagull* Sorin a really grand piece of arthritic senility ready to break in two like a doll by Caran d'Ache—the actor, Louis Salou, is quite young. Germanova magnificent; she makes you know exactly what sort of actress Arkadina is—a little of the Mrs Pat that was and a lot of the Mrs Pat that is. Masha and Konstantin not too good, but I enormously liked Pitoëff's Trigórin. P. is a not very good actor who, whenever I see him, is superb. His wife plays the first three acts like an angel, but fails in the fourth. A young player called Michel-François was intensely moving as Medvedenko; an older player called Pierre Risch, giving Dorn an almost Shakespeareian melancholy, said, "Ou je n'y comprends rien, ou je suis fou, mais cette pièce m'a beaucoup plu" as movingly as ever I heard words spoken on the stage.

¹ Years afterwards I discovered it was Brenden Bracken

April 11 Home again, having worn my bowler resolutely
Tuesday. throughout. Saw only three others all the time I
 was in Paris—the first worn by a stage detective,
 the second by a beggar in the Place Clichy, and the third on
 the head of a would-be vendor of highly unoriginal postcards.

No. 5 in my *Nouveaux Contes Scabreux*. The proprietress of a
 brothel is disgusted at her husband, who, instead of attending to
 business, spends the holidays visiting rival establishments with his
 friends. She complains to the neighbourhood generally, "Voilà
 trois jours de suite que mon mari fait la noce. C'est dégoûtant!"

April 22 Of course, if I will sit up till five in the morning
Saturday. drinking whiskey and discussing with Bergel whether
 Gibraltar is impregnable I must expect to pay for
 it. Had a bit of a nerve-storm in the car on the way to Sandown
 this morning. Could not get any lunch, but pulled myself
 together with two stiff drinks and a big cigar. Shall not consult
 a doctor. "Though age from folly could not give me freedom,
 it doth from childishness," said Cleopatra, and I say ditto. Read
 again Stevenson's *Æs Triplex*, which is all about not fearing
 death, and reflected how heartening I have always found this
when I am feeling well.

April 23 Our persistent rejection of conscription misleads
Sunday. both foes and friends. The totalitarian countries
 are deceived into thinking that the most this country
 is going to do to defend democracy is to make speeches, while
 the French point of view is admirably put in to-day's *Observer* :

From Monsieur Daladier downwards the whole of France
 surges against the theory that they should shed most of the
 blood while we make most of the munitions. Our individual
 right to shirk does not square with their universal liability
 to serve.

April 25 No. 6 in my *Nouveaux Contes Scabreux*. A wealthy
Tuesday. woman, who provides a gigolo with his entire income,
 is aroused one morning with a kiss and a request to
 pay his income tax.

April 26 Conscription at last. For young men between
Wednesday. twenty and twenty-one. There are to be no exceptions and no favouritism.

April 28 Very nervy and worried about Hitler's reply to the
Friday. Roosevelt manifesto. Cheer up when Pavia, with whom I am having a drink in a pub, notices an extremely ugly prostitute with a sailor in tow, and whispers, "Is that the face that sank a thousand ships?" As Leo's whisper is the loudest in London, we drink up and come away immediately.

May 3 Jock gives me a superb remark made to him by
Wednesday. Majdalany, the *Referee* critic. The two were in a pub during an interval in last night's play, when the landlord found it necessary to separate two black cats with a soda-siphon.

"What makes it worse, guv'nor, is that they're mother and son!"

"The CEdi-puss complex!" flashed Majdalany.

May 5 I sometimes wonder that I have any taste left. Here
Friday. is what I have had to cope with in the last five days.

Monday. Feverishly run through half a dozen books. Lunch with Francis Sullivan. Back to flat and review the six books. Dress, and bore myself stiff at the first night of the opera, *The Bartered Bride*. Sup at Rules with Bertie van Thal and a luscious lady who defeats me on the subject of bullock's-blood nails by taking us both back to her Chelsea house and laying and lighting a fire without other tongs. Drive Bertie home, and get to bed about three. *Tuesday.* Lunch at the Langham with Mark Lubbock, of the B.B.C., who wants me to compère an hour's programme of incidental music. Long confab with Stanford Robinson, conductor of the B.B.C. Theatre Orchestra, about our respective neuroses. Keep appointment with Jock at Southwark Cathedral! Next to the Gaumont for the *Wuthering Heights* film, after which a rubbishy play at the

St Martin's. Sup with Monty, who tells me his securities have depreciated £30,000 in the last six months. I reply that my unique security has gone up—this being the dug-out! Nobody much at the Savoy except Marie Tempest, in pink with a black ostrich-feather hat. Bed fairly early, say half-past two. *Wednesday*. Write *Fatler* article, lunch with B. at the Jardin des Gourmets, and have a look at the Academy. Next find myself at the Cézanne Exhibition, and here become conscious that my taste is becoming slowly but surely overworked. Only six of the twenty-odd canvases give me any real pleasure, and I stand for ten minutes in front of *Dans le Parc du Château Noir* completely baffled. Am so perturbed by this that I go to Heppell's and buy a three-guinea bottle of gland capsules. Home, dress, and spend the rest of the day swallowing capsules and wallowing in *Turandot* at the Opera. *Thursday*. Write my *Express* notes, lunch with Reggie Pound, go to the Ideal Home Exhibition and there turn over for Peter Page, who gives a recital on the Kaleidakon. The console is in the middle of a lake! Take tea with Peter, his mother, and Claire Luce, write my *John o' London's* article, dress, and brisk myself up for *The Intruder*, the English version of Mauriac's *Asmodee*. Bridge till three. *Friday*. At four o'clock this afternoon, having toiled all day at my *S.T.* article, I refuse to let Peter Page drag me to *Parsifal*. Instead I play bridge so sleepily that Mark and Benno send me home.

• •
May 6 Jock brings in the record of a symphony, and says
Saturday. I can have it if I can guess the composer. For
 a long time I think of Cherubini, then at the last
 moment change my mind, say, "Bizet," and am right! As a
 piece of ratiocinative guesswork this should rank high. It
 looks as though the gland capsules are working!

May 9 Saw, or rather heard, Toscanini last night for the
Tuesday. first time. It had better be "heard," because there
 was nothing to see. Listening to the Coriolan Over-
 ture, the Fourth Symphony, and the *Eroica*, I felt that I was
 once more being drilled in the Long Valley at Aldershot. For

this was drilled music. *I heard things in the score for the first time.* But even this reminded me of how one day I took my long-distance spectacles into the country, saw every leaf distinctly, and lost all sense of atmosphere! What I heard to-night was a *map* of the music, or Beethoven anatomised. Personally I like my Beethoven to be more human, less tidy, a little more sprawling, more beer- and tobacco-stained.

May 17 The showing season opened yesterday with the *Wednesday*. Devon County Show at Axminster. Sat up working till 4 A.M. Started for Axminster at 10.15, reached Yeovil at 1.30. Lunch, and then on to Axminster, where Ego won a good class in smashing style. Dined with Albert at the Bell, Gloucester, where they charge only 16s. for an excellent bottle of Bollinger N.V. This is 5s. less than in town. Arrived Sutton Coldfield about 1, the good Mrs Skeat, most admirable of hostesses, having sat up for us in her dressing-gown. I hear the Three Tuns is shortly to come down, which distresses me. Only one lavatory, every inconvenience, and yet the most comfortable inn I have ever struck! They make you feel so much like a private guest that paying the bill is always a delicate matter. I have even known Mrs S. telephone to London to know what I would like to eat on arrival. Spent the morning at the farm, liking Lady Viking, who is coming on nicely, and disliking King Neptune, who refuses to carry his almost excess of action like a gentleman. Albert promises to get to work on this, and if an animal can be "positioned" he will do it. Home at 7.30. Finished John Gielgud's *Early Stages*, which I had begun in the car, gutted Giles Playfair's *Kean*, and wrote 1700 words about them. Went out to supper, and bed about 3 A.M.

May 19 From Brother Edward :
Friday.

"Les anciennes mœurs orientales sont si prodigieusement différentes des nôtres que rien ne doit paraître extraordinaire à quiconque a un peu de lecture. Un Parisien est tout surpris quand on lui dit que les Hottentots font couper à leurs enfants

mâles un testicule. Les Hottentots sont peut-être surpris que les Parisiens en gardent deux.”—VOLTAIRE, *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, article “Circoncision.”

May 20 That generous soul and first-rate comedian Barry
Saturday. Lupino has added a diamond to my crown of walking-sticks—the ebony and ivory cane used by Vesta Tilley in “Algy.”

May 31 Off to Portsmouth for the Royal Counties and
Wednesday. National Hackney Show. A lovely evening drive in perfect weather; the lilacs and laburnums at their best.

June 1 Novice classes all day. These produce Person-
Thursday. ality, yet another son of Colman’s great horse Spotlight, a very good-looking, fine-moving, brown three-year-old stallion. He is in Ego’s class to-morrow, and looks dangerous. Portsmouth is crammed full, and there is only one room to be had. Fortunately, as I have to share it with Fred Leigh, whom I suspect of snoring, it is immense. What my *S.T.* article will read like I don’t know. It is three o’clock, and I have just finished writing it at the open window between a lively sea and Fred making a noise like a herd of elephants.

June 2 Albert says Ego will “walk” the class to-day, which
Friday. he promptly proceeds to do. Personality does not show up, his driver, Jimmie Black, saying that it is asking too much of a novice three-year-old to pit him against Ego, who is now eight and in magnificent fettle. I go round to Ego’s box to congratulate him, and find I am forestalled by Vera Pearce, who covers both of us with lipstick. Run down to the town to buy the two stable lads a wrist-watch and a cigarette-case. Poor Albert has to be content with my best thanks, the shade of the man Chenhalls precluding more.

June 18 Sunday. Symons's book on Baron Corvo begins, "My quest for Corvo was started by accident one summer afternoon in 1925, in the company of Christopher Millard." At lunch to-day Leo Pavia said, "You ask me about Millard. He was a most impressive person, immensely tall and imposing, and with a voice which had the organ-like quality of Forbes-Robertson and the thrilling tones of Henry Ainley. He compiled the only complete bibliography of Wilde's works, and wrote the most trustworthy account of his trial. He was a school-master with ideas about the relationship of pedagogue and pupil centuries behind his times! His enemies said he got into all sorts of trouble; it would be truer to say he got into only one sort. He had enormous intellectual pride backed by colossal brains, was always half-drunk, and never went to bed for the normal reason. He was the most splendid anachronism I have known."

June 24 Saturday. "The invariable result of inviting somebody to straighten out your affairs is that he flattens *you* out," said Peter Page, when I showed him a letter from the man Chenhalls saying the horses must be put down. With this in my pocket I watched Ego at West Bromwich repeat his win of two days ago at the Staffordshire County Show. He was at his golden best to-day. Just as I write this George, the chauffeur, comes in, and the following colloquy takes place:

J. A. (*snapping*). Well, what is it?

GEORGE (*speaking by rote*). I think you ought to know the car's in a bad way. The engine wants re-boring, the brakes aren't safe, we want at least three new tyres, and the shock-absorbers are giving me a pain in the belly.

J. A. (*scenting cheek*). Pain in the what?

GEORGE (*simply, as one stating a fact*). Belly.

J. A. (*rudely*). You and your belly can go to blazes!

GEORGE (*unruffled*). What about turning it in and getting a new car?

J. A. (*speechless*). . . .

GEORGE (*without expression*). Well, can I have the price of a new window on the driving side?

J. A. (*with studied calm*). Why?

GEORGE (*with a grin*). I've broke it!

June 25. Letter to Monty Shearman :
Sunday.

Villa Volpone
June 25, '39

DEAR MONTY,

The purport of this is to take leave of you until, with luck, some time in 1941. I have discharged my valet, the chauffeur trembles, Fred is a jelly, and even Jock hangs in precarious balance.

I shall hope, in my retreat, to have occasional news of your continued welfare and happiness. Even during these last disturbed weeks my spirit has been lightened by hearing that you and Eric Smith still pass gay evenings together bandying misquotations from Shakespeare.

But how is't with me when every *knock*, as you would say, *affrights* me?

The

rest

is

silence.

WILKINS MICAWBER AGATE

June 26. Gave a small luncheon party at the Savage Club.
Monday. The guests were Prince Chula of Siam, Prince

Birabongse of Siam, better known as "B. Bira" the racing motorist, C. B. Cochran, and Gordon Williams. Chula is very Oxford, and you would take him for English. Bira is the exact shade of my best brogues and an enchanting little idol to look at. He has the prettiest English wife and a passion for toy trains, and both young men live in flats whose décor out-Messels Messel. The talk at lunch centred almost entirely in Siamese myths, and whether these would be good Cochran material. Bira doesn't drink, and the four of us got through a bottle of hock and two bottles of Bollinger, after which I went to Gielgud's farewell "do" of *Hamlet* at the Lyceum, and supper at the Danish Legation.

June 30 Barry Lupino gave me a walking-stick used on the
Friday. stage by Harry Lauder.

July 1 The war scare all over again. In the meantime
Saturday. there is still some fun to be had. Here is the last
 sentence in a circular letter sent out by a West
 End firm of outfitters :

Whilst, as we have said, it is necessary for us to be ready to supply our customers with what they need under any circumstances, no one would rejoice more than ourselves at a European situation that caused our large stock of uniforms to become unsaleable.

July 2 The Lyceum closed its doors last night. Not much
Sunday. upset about this. All of the theatre in which Irving played was pulled down some time in the early nineteen hundreds, only the pillars remaining. A great scene at the end, with verses recited by John Gielgud, and a lot of enthusiasm which I take to have been jubilation. After all, it isn't every day we pull down a theatre in which there is always a danger that somebody may produce Shakespeare.

Supped at the Café Royal with Leo Pavia, who saw Irving's Hamlet at the 1885 revival.

J. A. What was he like ?

L. P. You couldn't hear half of what he said.

J. A. What did he *look* like ?

L. P. As though he had seen the Ghost !

We spent the rest of the meal devising a love poem in Brother Edward's manner, but could not get beyond the first line :

Come live with me and be my Hate . . .

July 25 *Nouveaux Contes Scabreux*, No. 7. This is a tale of
Tuesday. a rosy-cheeked schoolboy who turns his head to the master flogging him and winningly remarks, "Excuse me, sir, but this is pleasing me more than it is hurting you !"

Aug. 8 *Nouveaux Contes Scabreux*, No. 8. About a young
Tuesday. man who suffers from an incurable *disease* contracted
in Paris.

Aug. 18 From Brother Edward :
Friday.

DEAR JIM,

Mr Moiseiwitsch apart, and the pretty little incident of his playing one of my piano pieces which will fill up an untidy gap in your next *Ego*, I would have you know that to me they are not toys but part of my being—such as they are and such as I am. They are to me more personal even than your books are to you, for the question of money to be made by them does not enter into my calculation. I tell you this, as I foresee a snigger ahead. But I continue writing one a day, so that the black sheep of the family will not depart this life trackless! About a month ago I played eighteen of the Preludes to Gustave (the most musical of mortals) and made him snivel. That takes some doing with Brother Mycroft. But enough of this.

E. A.

Aug. 20 Southend with Leo. Appalling heat. Breakfast in
Sunday. room. According to the *Observer*, the crisis is on again,
and worse than ever. According to the *Sunday Times*,
nothing much is happening. According to the *Sunday Express*,
a great deal is happening, and all of it favourable to Britain.
Danzig, of course.

Afternoon. Lunched in room and wrote twelve business letters.

Evening. Wrote twelve more business letters, including long financial screed to the man Chenhalls. Shaved, dressed, and went downstairs at 10 P.M. At dinner Leo said, "Times have changed, James, and you with them. When I first knew you in 1921 your motto was 'In the beginning was the word.' Now it appears to be 'In the end is the cheque.'"

Aug. 21 Worked all morning and afternoon at book article
Monday. for D.E. At six o'clock set out for Burnham-on-

Crouch to pay my respects to Fred Winsor, the young golf-pro. with whom my matches in 1935 are fascinatingly (boringly ?) described in *Ego* 2. I have hardly had a golf-club in my hand for two years, and certainly the last full round I played was at Lytham in 1937, though I had a few holes at Lowestoft last year. Incidentally, the doctors have rather put me off golf—"three or four holes if you really feel like it"—though this has not been the reason for my desisting. To-day I contented myself with twenty-four shots with Winsor's No. 2 iron and mashie—my own clubs have been left behind—of which seven were as good as I have ever played. No ill results except a touch of asthma, which I suspect was coming on anyhow.

I asked Leo later what had been the best things in his life. He said, "Theatres, concerts, and good talks in pre-War London, Berlin, and Vienna." I said that that was going too far back, and that the best post-War things in my life had been evenings at the Old Vic, long days with Albert Throup and the horses, and my games of golf with Winsor. Frédéric Moreau, the hero of Flaubert's *L'Education Sentimentale*, and his friend Deslauriers thought that the *maison* of one Zoraïde Turc was "*ce que nous avons eu de meilleur.*" I hold the opposite view. The things I have set down are the best I have known in life for the reason that, while they were happening, *la sottise et criminelle sensualité a lâché prise*. For at heart I am a puritan. "*La débauche veut des âmes fortes,*" said Balzac, and I am that craven thing—the sensualist with qualms. Much braver to say with Gerald Gould :

For God's sake, if you sin, take pleasure in it,
And do it for the pleasure. Do not say ·
"Behold the spirit's liberty !—a minute
Will see the earthly vesture break away
And God shine through." Say : "Here's a
sin—I'll sin it ;
And there's the price of sinning—and I'll pay."

Aug. 22 Bombshell ! Germany announces a non-aggression
Tuesday. pact with Russia.

Aug. 24 Postcard from Brother Edward :
Thursday.

Obtained my gas-mask this morning and never thought I could perpetrate such a vulgarity. Cumbersome? Doubtless; but useful for the evasion of creditors. I can now tread Tooting Bec Common immune from the pursuit of infuriated publicans for "that half-crown," unless my moth-eaten garments betray me! I was in Surrey last week-end. The cows in the fields were still complacent, and coughed and calved as usual.

Aug. 26 Lunched at Frinton, which I have never forgiven
Saturday. for its refusal in 1914 and subsequently to allow wounded soldiers along its front. Actually I was trying to reach Felixstowe, but was held up by long stretches of the half-made London-Yarmouth road, which, if this had been Germany, would have been finished long ago. No signs of military activity except one brass-hat who nearly exploded when George did not give his car as much room as his air-mightiness demanded.

I have not the least idea what I shall do if war comes. I plan to continue this diary as long as possible, for which purpose I have laid in manuscript paper for a year. The idea is to remain in England. Otherwise I should remind the War Office that its System of Accountancy for the Purchase of Forage for Army Horses Abroad in Time of War was invented by me at Arles, Bouches-du-Rhône, France, in 1916, and that they gave me a captaincy for it.

Aug. 28 I gather that we shall win the war even if within
Monday. a week from the firing of the first shot St Paul's Cathedral is a heap of rubble and nobody can tell where Piccadilly Circus was. Have decided to cut my holiday short and return to London on Wednesday morning. Of all the days I have ever spent at Southend this is the fairest. Blazing sun, a spot of wind, the sea a blue mirror with myriads of little boats as in a canvas by Canaletto. Working at my window I hear the cries of the children below.

John Glennon has come down to replace Leo. After the wireless closes down he and I spend an hour on the balcony looking out over the estuary. Presently an enormous liner with all her portholes ablaze comes at great speed down the river. Then the ripple caused by her wash, and after that stillness. At 1 A.M. decide to return home, where we arrive around 3 A.M. Entirely uneventful journey throughout which we meet at most ten cars. No troop movements, no searchlights, no aeroplanes. A cloudy night and a perfect moon which, knowing its Alfred Douglas, wins to one empty space after another.

Aug. 30 The *Daily Mail* correspondent tells me at lunch
Wednesday. that the Polish plan is to entice the Germans well
 into Poland. The rains are due about the middle
of September, when the roads become impassable for heavy
mechanical transport. Whereupon the Polish cavalry, over a
million strong, is to fall on the waterlogged Germans. I do not
know that I altogether believe this.

Aug. 31 Succeeded, after something of a scene, in per-
Thursday. suading Brother Edward to go to York, where
 Brother Harry will look after him and try to get
him a job. Edward looked an old, very worn, and even sick
man, and talked a great deal about failures being the best kind
of bomb-fodder. However, I got him off, his last gesture
being a slip of paper handed out of the carriage window with
the words "Evacuating a genius at the cost of a £2 railway
ticket is what I call reasonable!" He had previously presented
me with the following :

LAST THOUGHTS IN PEACE-TIME

"Of all my numerous disciples, only one has ever understood me, and even he understood me falsely."—Hegel.

"I have observed very few who had not some employment; for the man who spends his time at the dice, or in playing the buffoon, may be said to do something."—Not Dr Johnson, but—Socrates!

"The other day I met a horse, with a crowd of people about him admiring his good qualities, and praising his strength and spirit. So I enquired of the owner of the horse : Is your horse very rich ?"—Xenophon's *Economics*.

Here let me record that my last indulgence before the inevitable was to interrupt making all fast at the Villa Volpone and go down to Queen's Hall to listen to *Ein Heldenleben*. I arrived in time for the opening bars, and left immediately after the piece. The effect of the music, plus the situation, was overwhelming.

Sept. 1 Shortly before six o'clock this morning Germany
Friday. invaded Poland and bombed ten of her principal cities. At 6 P.M. Chamberlain issued an ultimatum to Germany to the effect that if she does not immediately withdraw her troops from Poland the British Ambassador will ask for his passport.

Sept. 2 The mobilisation of the Army and Navy is now
Saturday. completed. If England is not at war it is, as Barrie's Cinderella said about the policeman's love-letter, "a very near thing." Reasonable time has to be allowed for the reply to Chamberlain's ultimatum, and then we're off! To-day's *Times* ends its second leader with the sentence : "The task [of ridding the world of military bullying] will be done again, no matter what the effort required ; and it will be done this time in a way which will ensure that our children will not have to repeat it." But that's equivocal. Does the writer mean no second Versailles Treaty, or a stiffer and sterner one to which what is left of Germany will be held ? I wonder what the shades of Clemenceau and Foch are thinking. Some say zero hour is fixed for noon to-day ; others that it will not be till Monday.

3 P.M. Nothing yet. I hear that we are waiting for the evacuation of the children to be completed. No excitement. No flag-waving. Only, last night in the pubs, all the old war-songs except "Tipperary." Warner Allen, who has got an undefined commission in the Air Force, told me that he came up from Reading this morning in just over four hours. By the way, the

"brass hat" mentality has not changed. "Do you know how to wear war uniform?" Brass Hat asked Warner, who goggled. "I mean," went on Brass Hat, "do you think you would feel at home in an officers' mess?" Warner, who was an officer in the last war and is one of the greatest living connoisseurs of wine, said he could at least try to feel at home in uniform and in the mess, and upon this was, rather doubtfully, passed. By the way, Jock, who supped last night with John Gielgud and Ralph Richardson, asked me to guess what was the one thing the actor who goes to the front decides shall not perish. His *bibelots* and bric-à-brac, his Matthew Smiths and his porcelain, all these may go up in smoke—excuse the war-time metaphor!—but not his uniquely valuable possession, his book of old Press notices!

Benny Bennett, a little hooper and the dude in a concert party we fell in with during the holiday, called on me to-day on his way home to Bristol. Said the last he saw of Southend was his top-hat—the one he wore in the number "This is the Life"—careerer seawards. He had thrown it over the pier railings and watched it bob up and down till the tide carried it out of sight.

WAR

Sept. 3
Sunday.

The night has been unruly; where we lay,
Our chimneys were blown down: and, as they say,
Lamentings heard i' the air, strange screams of death;
And prophesying, with accents terrible,
Of dire combustion and confus'd events,
New hatch'd to the woeful time.

Macbeth

The Prime Minister's speech in the House last night was accompanied by tremendous lightning, but hardly any thunder. It was more like stage lightning than the real thing. I watched the storm from the Savage Club. One moment complete darkness; the next a sheet of vivid green showing Westminster cut out in cardboard like the scenery in a toy theatre. The flashes lasted so long that you could count the buildings.

At ten o'clock to-day Hibberd, the chief announcer, told us that the Prime Minister would broadcast at eleven o'clock. Nothing can perturb Hibberd, but I fancied his voice struck a note unused since the death of George V. Next the country gave itself up to light music for an hour, ending with a "Selection from *Princess Ida*"! And then, at 11.15 precisely, the solemn tones of the P.M. Speaking with an intensely English accent, unassailable dignity, and legitimate emotion, Chamberlain told us that, since Germany had not replied to the ultimatum, England was now at war.

At half-past eleven the first air-raid warning goes. Orderly retreat to dug-out. Nothing happens. "All clear" after half an hour. We go into the street, and I see a man look at his watch and hear him say, "They're open!"

Presently Jock comes round in search of his gas-mask, and tells me two things. (1) That the Irish navvies in Camden Town refuse to leave London though Eire has declared herself neutral. One of them said to him, "Oi don't mind dying for Ireland, but Oi won't live in it!" (2) That this morning's air-raid sirens caught him at breakfast in the Strand Corner House, and drove him into the basement. He adjures me to say that his first and chief emotion took the form of the angry exclamation, "What a *very* unattractive crowd of people to have to die with!" This sets Jock down, in his own words to me, as a ceaseless, remorseless, and hopeless voluptuary! He openly declares that he now lives, and is quite willing to die, with this view of himself. He adds that the operative word in this last testament is "quite."

Well, Jock can say of himself what he likes. I know, and put on record here, that the first day I set eyes on him I recognised the strange beauty of his mind and spirit, and that I have not been deceived, or ever thought I could be. He has been my friend and counsellor, pupil and sometimes mentor; and never does, nor can, his wit run dry.

6.0 P.M. The King broadcasts a "message to his people." This is obviously a great strain, and he comes through it nobly.

8.0 P.M. The setting sun turns the barrage balloons to golden

asteroids. Jock quarrels with my choice of colour and says it should be *rolled* gold.

12.0 P.M. So far as I can judge in my suburb, which I have not left to-day, the people are taking the war with extraordinary calmness. In one matter I confess that I have been utterly wrong. I expected every road leading out of London to be cluttered up and impassable. Actually, not only has there been no exodus, but the traffic has been less than on an ordinary Sunday.

Fred Leigh is a mountain of comfort. He has produced an unexpected round of beef. Also two beds, which I did not know I possessed. He has set these up in our big "garden-room," which sounds so much better than "back basement." The idea is to take it in turns to sleep, as neither of us wakes easily, and we don't know yet whether we should hear the sirens. The B.B.C. has been exemplary all day, dispensing music not too heavy and not too light. Homely stuff, with many familiar airs and ballads, things like "Sally in our Alley," which at this juncture are strangely moving. The telephone too has been on its best behaviour.

4 A.M. I had just written the above when, round about three o'clock, the second air-raid warning sounded. It was my watch; indeed, I had not gone to bed. I woke Fred, and we made an orderly trek to the dug-out. Stayed there an hour and a half.

Sept. 4 An item which would once have excited me: the
Monday. sudden death of Nigel Colman's great horse Spotlight.

Sept. 5 Notice at the top of my road: "Come and Help
Tuesday. to Load Sandbags with Margate Sand."

Ralph Baker has joined the R.A.M.C. with two pips. His flat closing down, I went round to collect the books he had from me on loan. Jock says I only needed a perambulator to look exactly like O'Casey's Bessie Burgess! The Camden Town jeweller from whom I bought a cheap wrist-watch told me that he had sold thirty wedding-rings in two days, as against the normal three or four. A poor woman coming in to buy

a modest signet ring and asking to have "From your Loving Wife" engraved on it was told that no engravers were available. At the chemist's a well-dressed woman demanded a slimming preparation. How's that for the eternal feminine? One of the most depressed men in London to-day was the shopkeeper at Chalk Farm whose line is flares, beacons, and material for bonfires.

Sept. 6 Sirens went at 6.50 this morning. Woke me, but
Wednesday. not Fred. We have given up the watch business, and snore in unison; what the banks call collateral security. In the dug-out read Noel Coward's new book of extremely witty short stories. When I came to "There was a signed photograph of Sarah Bernhardt looking like a sheep in white lace" I found I had forgotten about the air raid. Hearing nothing whatever, we emerged at 7.50 into a perfect September morning. Hung about, chatting to wardens, patting the milkman's pony, and so on, until 9.20, when the "all clear" sounded. Discussion in Parliament yesterday about the difficulty of distinguishing between this and the alarm signal; what song the sirens are singing has become a matter of practical politics. *Daily Express* boy, arriving with my proof round about midday, informs me that we brought down a German plane at either Walthamstow or Wolverhampton—he doesn't seem to mind which. Hornchurch and Chatham are fancied a great deal, and my charwoman absolute for Bloomsbury. Learned later that nothing was brought down except, by mistake, one of our own planes.

I used to agree with Hazlitt's "Egotism is an infirmity that perpetually grows upon a man, till at last he cannot bear to think of anything but himself, or even to suppose that others do." In war-time this does not hold. I realise that I have become a person of no distinction, and it is this which I find disconcerting. *Per contra*, all sorts of people one had regarded as amiable noodles now turn out to be of immense importance. They burst upon the club in uniform and hold forth where they used to listen. I feel like Kipling's Eustace Cleever,

"decorator and colour-man in words," who found himself abashed in the company of young men of action.

Sept. 7 Anatole France, in one of his novels, refers to a
Thursday. satirical drawing made by Gustave Doré during the Crimean War. This shows a monk writing in his cell while all around him is carnage. The monastery is on the verge of collapse, and in the doorway of the monk's precariously poised cell a hand-to-hand fight is going on. In the midst of all this the monk, whose name I suspect to be Brother Edward, still keeps his nose in his manuscript and continues to write. France has the comment: "Voilà ce que c'est que de vivre dans les bouquins! Voilà le pouvoir des paperasses!" What I want to know is what else the monk should have done. I propose to glue my nose to *Ego* as long as I and it have sticking power.

Sept. 8 The evenings and the long closetings at the Villa
Friday. Volpone proving *tant soit peu énervants*, the fact that I get no news, and Fred having developed a snore like the air-raid warble, I have decided to move to the Savage Club. My reaction to air raids is curiously like Spintho's reaction to martyrdom in Shaw's *Androcles and the Lion*: I am prepared to go through with them provided they happen on a day when my nerves are in good order. My offer to send Fred to join his family at Welshpool is indignantly refused. I may want to come back to the Villa, he is not going to desert me, and having built the dug-out he intends to enjoy it. All this is conveyed with a moon-faced inflexibility which suggests Jay Laurier in the rôle of Cato.

Sept. 9 A jorum of presents from Jock in honour of my
Saturday. sixty-second birthday. Two gramophone records of Scriabin's early piano pieces. Also a copy of Ristori's *Memoirs*. My mother, when she was carrying me, was taken by my father to see Ristori in Paolo Giacometti's *Queen Elizabeth*. This excited her so much that I very nearly

miscarried! Gummied into the book are a number of old newspaper cuttings, among which I find an account of the great Italian actress's assault on Paris in 1855. The first appearance was unsensational. At the second, for which she chose Alfieri's *Myrrha*, the result is described as "electrifying," a word which in those days meant something. The audience included Alexandre Dumas, Jules Janin, Scribe, and Théophile Gautier. Next she seems to have appeared in the *Medea* of Ernest Legouvé, Scribe's collaborator in *Adrienne Lecouvreur*. Legouvé was moved to write of the new actress, "Tall, of magnificent proportions, chestnut hair: I was immediately struck by the sovereign beauty of her eyes. What eyes! I have seen their equal only in Talma and in Malibran!" Italics mine. Odd how the name insists on cropping up anywhere and everywhere.

Last and most treasurable among Jock's presents is this cutting from the *Manchester Guardian*. The date is September 8, 1914.

Since the war began we have seen some plays that could not live with it. It found them out, as sunlight finds out rouge; one felt that, in trying to give oneself up to them, one was abetting a kind of futility, helping to make believe that anything else could matter while history, real and hard, could almost be heard outside, galloping through the night. But *Twelfth Night* has nothing to fear. . . .

Even Armageddons are only means, and the joy of such treasures as these is an end; though the nations fight for a generation, it is to these that they will turn back in hunger at last, as they will turn to hills and the sea. Whatever else falls in this season of shaken assumptions and rearranged thoughts, the hold of great art on the mind will not give; it will last as long as the "true and virtuous soul" that, "though the whole world turns to coal, Then chiefly lives." So it was well that Miss Horniman opened her autumn's work last night with this specimen of the undefeatable, inextinguishable treasures beside which even a 42-centimetre Krupp gun is but as a fashion in hats. Peace, when it comes, would be worth so much the less to the returning soldier and every one else if the artists were only to sit down now and sigh for it.

C. E. M.

Sept. 10 Any port in a storm, and, I suppose, any panacea
Sunday. in a time of nerves. Harold Dearden is, at the moment, my most fantastic reassurer. Because the earth is a spinning globe from which I may be hurled at any minute, and because I do not worry about this ultimate catastrophe, why worry about "comparatively childish things such as air raids"? I envy the mind that is comforted by this sort of thing.

Bergel tells me to-night of a line in the order to L.C.C. evacuation centres in London: "Expectant mothers must show their pink forms." J. G. B. is a great retailer of anecdotes. He and Basil Cameron invade my room in the early hours and consent to withdraw only on my representing (1) that I am not passionately fond of Sibelius's *Tapiola* at any time, and (2) that I actively dislike it played on an emergency gramophone at three in the morning in war-time.

Sept. 14 From Mrs Johnstone's Spanish war book *Hotel*
Thursday. *in Flight*: "Little Alfonso, our singing plumber, was a prisoner; Juan, the champion tango dancer, was dead." Butterflies, especially the human sort, should be immune from destruction. Swiftiness should not overtake, of all people, the dancer of the languorous, timeless tango.

Rather pleased with a sentence in my review of Eddy Knoblock's *Round my Room*. Confessing lifelong passion for Dure, he says that he once met her in a lift and dared not speak. My note on this is that obviously she was going up while he was coming down.

Moiseiwitsch tells me that his entire season of forty-seven concerts and recitals has been cancelled. I don't understand the behaviour of the B.B.C. with regard to such concerts as they have cancelled. The public pays 10s. a year in the knowledge that part of that amount will be spent on high-class music and executants of high standing. Is the B.B.C. going to refund to the Government 1000000, which is what I pay to hear Moiseiwitsch? Or does it intend to pocket it, while fobbing me off with gramophone records? That the Government, fearing

the crowding together of large numbers of people, should ban concerts before an audience is no reason why they should not be given in an empty room before a microphone.

I had just finished writing a set of verses, entitled *A Soldier's Farewell to his Hobbies*, for my *Daily Express* Saturday Notes when word arrived that these, but not my book reviews, are to be discontinued. This bombshell amounts to £1000 a year. The point now is to see that a proportionate part of the explosion occurs in the pocket of the income-tax collector. I shall pay my revenue and all other debts in time, but I must have time; for many months I have been paying out £200 and sometimes £225 in reduction of my liabilities. I must be able to carry on with my work *without the interruption of bankruptcy*. The difficulty is to get Bush House to see this.

Went to Golder's Green Hippodrome. The piece chosen to re-open the London Theatre is *The Importance of Being Earnest*. O. W.'s shade, remembering how at Reading station a man publicly spat on the handcuffed prisoner, is probably turning a bitter epigram about this. Here is mine :

VOLTE-FACE

He spat and passed.
The pederast
Nor bowed, nor shook his head;
The world unkind
Drew down the blind
On one it deemed was dead.

The man who hissed,
The moralist,
Now laughs to split his side,
The world uncertain
Rings up the curtain
On one who has not died.

Sept. 16 *The Times* has an excellent article on the theme
Saturday. of "Sufficient unto the day." "If a man's imagination is active with what may be he will be less able to meet in a resolute and quiet spirit that which is. He will be fighting upon two fronts. . . ."

In other words, ignore the newspaper placards which announce "Stalin keeps us guessing." Personally I shall confine speculation to Mrs Gamp's "Some people may be Rooshans, and others may be Prooshans, they are born so, and will please themselves." To worry about what Stalin *and* the income-tax collector are going to do would be to fight on two fronts at once. Arnold Bennett would have registered any fact about his health during a trying period. Let me record that since the middle of August I have lost exactly one stone in weight.

In Piccadilly saw a top-hat, and also a policeman wearing a monocle. Last night *les dames du trottoir* murmuring, "Coming home, dearie?" flashed a pocket torch into the prospective client's face. Better, surely, to flash it into their own? Lunched with Stephen Haggard, George Devine, Peggy Ashcroft, and Sophie Harris, the founder of Motley, the theatre designers. Devine told me that the Islington gangs are very much out of hand. They carry penknives with quarter-inch-long blades, which maim without doing fatal injury. One gang is said to have raped an old woman of seventy in Upper Street last night. Another gang of eight members has joined the same A.R.P. anti-fire unit. The idea is that two manipulate the hose while six loot.

Sept. 21 For the past three weeks I have worked at a little
Thursday. table in the window of my bedroom at the Savage
Club. The table is rickety, and the window is an
abominable affair of two slats. As the glass is painted blue the
bottom slat has to be kept raised, which will not be possible
in winter. During these last few days of glorious weather I
have frequently interrupted my work to gaze at the panorama,
the sweep of which begins at the Horse Guards, takes in Downing
Street, the Houses of Parliament and the Abbey, and ends with
Battersea Power Station and Westminster Cathedral. Is there
a dullish stretch between the dome of Lloyds Bank and the
Underground offices? Nature and art have provided com-
pensation. For in the foreground a break in the trees gives a

glimpse of that lake in St James's Park which I have always associated with Tchekhov's *The Seagull*, perhaps because white birds continually skim its surface. Silvery shrubs fringe the border on this side ; on the other is a sloping lawn with a walk and seats. Here, I have found myself thinking, might Konstantin have pondered his play, and Trigorin worked out his neat, pat metaphors. For a fortnight this Tchekhovian composition has been bathed in sunshine ; to-day it is clouded over. But I am no believer in the Pathetic Fallacy, and anyhow it was yesterday, perhaps the most radiant day of all, that I saw in a corner of *The Times* that Georges Pitoëff had died. For twenty-five years he has been the prop and mainstay of the French intellectual theatre, doing for Paris what the Vedrenne-Barker management did for London, only over a much longer period. His spirit was kin to Jack Grein's, and if his theatre was more successful than Jack's it was because he was working in a country friendly to art, whereas the English have always been hostile. Pitoëff was a not-very-good actor who always gave me immense pleasure, his features looked as though they had been carved out of some hard, corrugated wood. Discussing this great loss with an art editor, a theatre designer, and a leading journalist, all at the club, I was profoundly shocked to find that none of them had ever heard of Pitoëff.

Start my "Comfortable Passages from Great Literature" series for the *Express* with Christina Rossetti's *Remember*, and immediately receive two letters. One, from Dulwich, tells me that the writer's husband, now serving in the R.A.F., sent her a copy of C. R.'s poem on the previous day, the anniversary of their wedding. Another writes from Nottingham, "I sit here alone in the house and afraid of the black-out," and goes on, "Here is something that I wrote to-night." And there follows this poem :

And now to think of quiet things,
Still springs, dear cool shallow streams,
And cats' eyes, contented after milk ;
Skies of any colour, be they calm,
Music of tranquil pattern,

And hands that I have seen and loved
 In movement and repose ;
 Beauty, unclamorous and abiding,
 Stilled life and meadows,
 Chilled, romantic winter-evening air ;
 To think of fires and grates and draughts,
 Of trees and dappled sunlight ;
 Of statuary ; of moths ,
 To think of swallows' wings : of England.

Jock may be right in saying that this is Rupert Brooke and water. I think it is pretty good for a woman who is not a professional poet, alone with the jitters at Nottingham.

Listened in to Roosevelt's speech to Congress on the American embargo. I gathered from the applause with which the word "peace" was received that America is quite content to let European civilisation perish, and that nothing less than a drop in Hollywood's receipts will bring her into the war. Once again Dickens provides the perfect parallel. This is Pecksniff's "There is disinterestedness in the world, I hope? We are not all arrayed in two opposite ranks: the *offensive* and the *defensive*. Some few there are who walk between; who help the needy as they go; and take no part with either side. Umph!" Roosevelt umph'd to-night most Pecksniffianly.

Sept. 23 Leo came to lunch. He told me that originally
 Saturday. *The Importance of Being Earnest* was written in
 four acts, and was cut down by George Alexander
 to three. The original third act contained a scene in which
 Algernon Moncrieff was arrested for debt. When told that he
 would be taken to Pentonville, Algernon said, "Never. If
 Society thought that I was familiar with so remote a suburb
 it would decline to know me." Leo said, "I know all about
 this because from 1906 to 1909 I was the official German trans-
 lator of Wilde's plays. In this capacity I got to know Baron
 von Teschenberg, who had a copy of the four-act version. He
 became a great friend of mine, and swindled me out of five
 hundred pounds."

Sept. 24 Coming out of the Café Royal into the pitch darkness of Piccadilly Circus, I heard a man playing on a tin-whistle the old hymn: "How sweet the name of Jesus sounds." This had a half-eclectic, half-emotional effect on the crowd, which was standing still to listen.

Sept. 25 Peter Page dined with me last night at the Café *Monday*. Royal. Full from seven onwards—the Café, not P. P.—and easily the most cheerful place in town. Wonderful meal for 5s. 6d. Hors d'œuvres, soup, half a lobster, half a partridge, cheese. After dinner joined Ashley Dukes and Martita Hunt, who now wears in each ear three thick wedding-rings welded together. With unusual discretion refrained from telling her that the effect is Bayham-Badgeresque.

Note that the French chose yesterday to hold at the Comédie Française "une matinée poétique à la gloire du génie français." There's *panache* for you!

Sept. 26 To Chelsea Barracks with Gerald Moore, who with *Tuesday*. Joan Cross, Henry Wendon, and Arthur Fear was entertaining the Scots Guards. I gathered that "Roll out the Barrel" and the old "If You Were the Only Girl in the World," "Take Me Back to Dear Old Blighty," and "Tipperary" are the popular songs at the moment, and in that order. The "Barrel" song looks like being the new "Tipperary."

Sept. 27 Talked to James Bone about the war as it affects *Wednesday*. people who are in arrears with the Revenue. He said, "I remember meeting you in the Cheshire Cheese in August 1914. You were hard at it then, debating the same problem with George Mair." Took Helen Haye to dinner at C.R., and in view of the income-tax rise of 2s. ordered half a bottle of the usual. Then drove for a little about London, which in the moonlight had suddenly become pure eighteenth century.

Sept. 28 A letter from my jittery poetess :
 Thursday.

DEAR MR AGATE,

I was amazed to hear from you. So much so that I rang up my husband and read your letter to him. He said, "Frame it!" I felt so happy that I went and gazed at myself in a mirror. I stared at myself in my brilliant red jumper, and could not believe that I was me. Then I started to grin like a Cheshire cat, then I thought of doing some work, then I thought of not doing some work. Here is a thing that I like and which I wrote perhaps a year ago :

I shall grow old and taste defeat.
 But I have seen that food eaten gives strength.
 And I will chew defeat
 Until I get from it
 What strength it has to give.

But the letter is a long one, and I feel I cannot afford the writer too much encouragement. Am nervous of poetesses of a too, poetically speaking, coming-on disposition.

Sept. 29 Monty has a theory that in war-time everybody
 Friday. should allow himself half an hour of strict pleasure every day. It may be a rubber of bridge, listening to gramophone records, a talk, a book, a cigar, writing letters. Or even, if you are lucky, receiving letters. Here is an extract from one I got this morning from a woman playwright invited by an extremely well-known actress, whom I will call Miss Bracegirdle, to discuss production of her play *Double One Club* :

Miss Bracegirdle summoned me to tea and little luke-warm scones. We had a very interesting chat about Miss Bracegirdle's daughter. We also discussed a long-since defunct uncle of Miss Bracegirdle with whom she used to stay when she was a little girl. I nearly wrote "child," but anyone meeting Miss Bracegirdle for the first time must know at a glance that *never* has Miss Bracegirdle been anything so crude and ambiguous as a child, but always and under no matter how trying the circumstances she remained a *little girl*.

Fully alive to the tender susceptibilities of even the most unknown of authors, Miss Bracegirdle just *touched*, as lightly as the shadow of a cloud falling on a rose, on the advisability of taking the laughs from the minor characters who wouldn't know what to do with them anyway, poor things, and giving them to One of the Bigger Patts, to some one who *knew*. . . . Miss Bracegirdle didn't want to *make any suggestions*—after all, that was *my* department—but undoubtedly she had a *great deal* more experience. . . . Of course she didn't want to *interfere*—she was quite sure the *author knew*—but if I didn't mind a *suggestion* from an *old hand*. . . it really would make the very charming and *so true* play that I had written more . . . well, just *more*. . . if *some one*—say, just for argument's sake, the *Mother*—had all the laughs.

No Art for Art's sake about me that day, I am ashamed to say, and very falsely I agreed that of course it would be *much*—the italic-habit being catching—better for the Mother to have all the laughs. And I comforted myself for my lack of integrity by the reflection that at any rate the public *would* know when to laugh.

Having written and told me that she “liked my play *very much indeed*—better than any play she had read for a *long time*,” Miss Bracegirdle then decided while at Buxton Hydro, at the *Buxton* Hydro, that she was going to do *Having no Heart, Partner?* instead.

As Shakespeare so very nearly said, come what come may, Time and Miss Bracegirdle run through the roughest day.

Oct. 9 Gerald Barry gave me this pretty thing, the work,
Monday. he tells me, of Johnny Morton :

EPITAPH FOR A PROFITEER

Here lies Kartoffelstein,
Called latterly Fitzwarren.
There is some corner of an English field
That is for ever foreign.

Ran into Evelyn Montague, Philip Jordan, and other war correspondents in their ~~smart~~ new uniforms. Announced intention of designing, and being first wearer of, uniform for peace correspondents!

Oct. 10 Brother Edward sends me this from York :

Tuesday.

"There are those who can move their ears, one or both, as they please: there are those that can move all their hair towards their forehead, and back again, and never move their heads. There are those that can counterfeit the voices of birds and of other men, cunningly: and there are some who can break wind backward continuously, that you would think they sung."—St Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*.

Oct. 11 The depressing thing about *Music at Night*, which
Wednesday. bored me stiff at Malvern last year and which

I had to endure again to-night, is to find Priestley falling into the small-town error of imagining that all smart and successful people are, *au fond* and if they would be honest with themselves, miserable. Take the case of the gossip-writer in this play. I know many gossip-writers, all of whom find writing gossip an admirable way of fulfilling their empty selves. Now Jack cannot see himself as a gossip, unless, of course, it is one of the esoteric variety chattering about Time and Eternity. Therefore nobody can be a gossip and be sincere about it, whence it follows that the *courriériste* in this play must be wearing a mask. Then take the courtesan. It is inconceivable to Jack that a courtesan best expresses herself by being a courtesan. To him an unfortunate is a woman who has been abused. "C'est si facile de nier ce que l'on ne comprend pas!" said Balzac. "If I disapprove of a thing it doesn't exist!" booms Priestley. "My Snoops Linchester and all the rest of the world's Snoopses are good little girls lisping songs of innocence until they meet some nasty millionaire who takes advantage of them." (It never occurs to honest Jack that the Snoops Linchesters spend their entire time, whether appearing to listen to music or anything else, in calculating how much advantage they can reap from being taken advantage of!) Wherefore Snoops turns out to be only Marguerite Gautier all over again—"J'ai rêvé campagne, pureté; je me suis souvenue de mon enfance—on a toujours eu une enfance, quoi que l'on soit devenue"—and must, when

she opens her heart to us, babble of green fields and girlhood's buttercups and daisies. As Olivier de Jalin, in Dumas's *Le Demi-monde*, so nearly said: "Il faut arriver de Bradford pour avoir cette idée-là."

Oct. 12 * Stanley Rubinstein reports complete success with
Thursday. all creditors. Horses turned out to grass, car turned in, chauffeur sacked, income taken over, cheque-book exchanged for one marked "Private Account," into which a pittance will be paid every Monday morning. I feel like a remittance man who has *not* been packed off to Australia.

Oct. 13 "It was in this year that my uncle began to break
Friday. in upon the regularity of a clean shirt" (*Tristram Shandy*). To-day for the first time in history I put on yesterday's shirt.

Oct. 30 Seventeen days of sitting up till four and five in
Monday. the morning working at my anthology for the Forces, *Speak for England*. Clemence Dane gave me the title, it is the phrase shouted in the House the other day when Arthur Greenwood got up to speak on the declaration of war. After wasting a lot of time and going through agonies of indecision I drew up a set of rules which I then rigidly adhered to:

- (1) War to be background only.
- (2) Connecting thread of anthology to be Rupert Brooke's "the thoughts by England given."
- (3) Anthology must hang together.
- (4) Must be intelligible to average soldier.
- (5) Nothing to bore or depress.
- (6) The note to be R. B.'s sonnet transposed into the key of "If he, *i.e.*, another, should die . . ."

I found snags everywhere. Modern poetry too grim. Sassoon's horrors put him out of the question. I tried hard to have that moving poem of Wilfred Owen with its exquisite concluding

line, "And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds." But then there was that first line, "What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?" Hardly encouraging to open the anthology at a poem called *Anthem for Doomed Youth*! Tom Driberg thought the sailors might like Hopkins's *Wreck of the Deutschland*. Just don't see how the average A.B. is going to cope with a rigging full of nuns, or the gushing of a "lush-kept plush-capped sloe mouthed to flesh-burst." The prose selections were just as difficult. I had decided upon Thackeray's magnificent passage in the ninth chapter of *Esmond* beginning "Why does the stately Muse of History," but had to reject it in view of General Staff's susceptibility in the matter of a C.-in-C. who would steal "a portion out of a starving sentinel's three-farthings." However, I got the anthology done at last, and delivered to the hour.

Oct. 31 *The Amazing Theatre* published. I think there's *Tuesday*. some wit in it, but I find it amazingly badly written.

No inner rhythm, no flow, no muscles under the skin. I told Jock that what I call my style is not style at all, and that my way of writing in disconnected nodules turns the stuff into a heap of rabbit droppings. Jock, with a smile: "Shall we say *unset gems*?"

Nov. 6 - Recently in my neighbour's back garden, very *Monday*. beautiful in these mellow days, I saw a man and a boy digging a grave, or so it seemed, and both intensely Shakespearian. The man was in the grave, while the boy idled on the verge. I called Jock, who said, "Go, get thee to Yaughan: fetch me a stoup of liquor." I forgot all about this until last night, when, looking out of my bedroom window, I saw the moon shining on the tomb of the Capulets. It was my neighbour's Anderson shelter.

Nov. 7 The papers are making a fuss about night clubs *Tuesday*. and the soldiers on leave. What monstrous humbug!

What the boys are going to demand is lights, fun, drink, and a girl to cuddle—all at reasonable prices. This is

entirely proper. "Single men in barricks don't grow into plaster saints," wrote Kipling. Neither do single men on active service!

Nov. 11 Although there was no ceremony in Whitehall
Saturday. to-day all the buses stopped at eleven o'clock,
and people stood still in the streets.

Nov. 13 Perhaps, after all, there is something in the theory
Monday. that only the ultra-busy can find time for every-
thing. Jock being laid up with what he calls an
Anthological Carbuncle, I have to-day written 1000 words
for *Shopping News*, corrected the first batch of proofs of the
anthology, lunched in town *taking the bus both ways*, and dealt
with an unusually large *Express* mail. To recognise junk is a
matter of a quarter of a second, to write a note of thanks and
bung the stuff back takes minutes. In the middle of all this
I found time to amuse myself with a parody of Meredith:

LOVE IN THE VALLEY

When from bed she rises clothed from neck to ankle
In her long nightgown sweet as boughs of May
Beautiful she looks, like a tall garden-lily
Pure from the night, and splendid for the day.

LOVE IN THAMES VALLEY

When to bed she hastens tasselled round the middle,
In her neat pyjama striped and tiger-bright,
Beautiful she looks, more fit than any fiddle,
Pure from the day, and splendid for the night.

Nov. 18 Two coincidences at the Savage Club dinner.
Saturday. (1) I was reading from Kenneth Edwards's account
of Holbrook's raid on the Dardanelles in 1915,
and had just got to where the Turkish batteries opened fire
on the B.11 when three I.R.A. bombs fell in Regent Street
with the precision of "noises off." (2) Later I asked George
Mathew what the time was. He said 9.14. I pulled my watch

out of my pocket, where it had lain unwound for a week. The hands showed 9.14 exactly.

Sat next to Eddie Marsh, who told me the story of how Charles Morgan, now working at the Admiralty, ran into an old sea-dog. "What are you doing here?" barked the S.D. "In the Intelligence, sir," said Charles. "Get your hair cut!" snapped the S.D. Eddie liked my tale of how, during an air-warning at night, he had been seen scampering across the lawn at the back of Raymond Buildings in a flannel nightgown, with no *sang-froid*, no monocle, and only one eyebrow. James Bone is the wicked inventor of this.

Nov. 19 Berlioz' *Symphonie Fantastique* was well played by the London Philharmonic under Sidney Beer this afternoon. If the symphony were a modern work it would be remarkable; considering that it is pre-Liszt and pre-*leitmotif* and pre the symphonic poem, it is stupendous. The audience was small and wildly enthusiastic, as usual with this unluckiest of composers, probably the most original genius of the lot, since he invented modern orchestration and so showed the way to Liszt, Wagner, Tchaikowsky, and Strauss.

In the S.T. to-day Ernest Newman wants to know why fourth-rate works like Saint-Saens's *Le Rouet d'Omphale* continue to be played, while nobody will ever want to hear again works like Pick-Mangiagalli's *Sortilegi* or Hamerick's *Symphonie Spirituelle*. "Yet probably the invention, and certainly the craftsmanship, of either of these works is superior to that of the Saint-Saens." I can tell Ernest Fourth-rate composers who endure do so because they have hit upon a tune or a rhythm or a trick of atmosphere which the public wants to hear and go on hearing. If the public doesn't find something ear-haunting in a composer all the invention and craftsmanship in the world won't save him. With the possible exception of the *Carnaval Romain* there is hardly a whistleable original tune in the whole of Berlioz. The fact that *that* invention and *that* craftsmanship and *that* glorious hash of sound have not popularised this all but colossal genius proves my point.

Amusing dinner last night at the Berkeley Grill. Host, Herbert Morgan. Guests, clockwise, Mrs A. P. Herbert, Humbert Wolfe, Lady Annaly, A. P. Herbert, Pamela Frankau, J A., Princess Bibesco. From the latter's intarissable flow I disengaged this: "Men can no more conceive a revolution without atrocities than women can conceive a hat without a feather." Also this story of the late Lord Curzon, who had a mania for rearranging the caskets in the family vault. The second footman, whose Sunday morning job it was to do this, when asked whether he didn't find it a gruesome business, replied, "No. I used to like hearing his lordship say, 'Jenkins, put the tenth Baron on the third shelf.'"

Nov. 25 Letter from a soldier at the front to his wife :
 Saturday. "No, dear Mabel, I am not spending any money on mademoiselles or beer. I am sending it all to you. So let me fight this bloody war in peace."

Nov. 28 Listened in last night to Chopin's deservedly little-known Sonata for Piano and 'Cello, Op. 65. While Tuesday. this wilderness was being explored Jock wrote down the list of Chopin's works *in their order of composition*. I checked this to-day and found the list complete except for four blanks, and the opus numbers correct in all but six cases.

Nov 29 From a Harley Street lecture on the subject of Wednesday. How to Sleep Well: "Be careful how you spend the evening. It's what you do out of bed that affects you when you turn in" One of those cases, surely, in which the converse is equally true!

Dec. 1 To the Embassy last night to see a modern-dress Friday. version of *Julius Caesar*. I hate this preciousness, the argument for which presumably runs something like this. The Elizabethans saw these plays acted in the costume of *their* day. Why shouldn't we, the audiences of 1939, see

them acted in the costume of *our* day, the idea being that the modern audience is a feeble-witted thing which will be put off if the clothes are other than those which it is accustomed to see in the street? All right, let's agree! But since what is sauce for the eye is sauce for the ear also, then this poor, feeble-witted modern audience must be equally put off when the language used in a play is not that which it is accustomed to hear in the street. This being so, why not re-write the plays to suit the modern ear? Why all this old-fashioned stuff about the "Bay'd, brave hart," hunters "signed in thy spoil and crimson'd in thy lethe," dishes carved for gods, dumb mouths opening ruby lips, and so on? To-day a dictator is bumped off or not, as the case may be. Reading Damon Runyon's story *The Brain Goes Home* in bed last night, I came across a passage which only wants some alteration in the names to be a perfect transcription of Shakespeare's Act III, Sc. 1. Reading Daffy Jack as Brutus, the Brain Cæsar, Homer Swing Metellus Cimper, Big Nig Mark Antony, and the teller of the story as Lepidus, here is the passage:

Now what happens early one morning but a guy by the name of Brutus hauls off and sticks a shiv in Cæsar's left side. It seems that this is done at the request of a certain party by the name of Metellus Cimper, who owes Cæsar plenty of dough in a gambling transaction, and who becomes very indignant when Cæsar presses him somewhat for payment. It seems that Brutus, who is considered a very good shiv artist, aims at Cæsar's heart, but misses it by a couple of inches, leaving Cæsar with a very bad cut in his side which calls for some stitching.

Mark Antony, the crap-shooter, and I are standing at the corner of Fifty-second Street and Seventh Avenue along about 2 A.M., speaking of not much, when Cæsar comes stumbling out of Fifty-second Street, and falls in Mark Antony's arms, practically ruining a brand-new topcoat, which Mark Antony pays sixty bucks for a few days back, with the blood that is coming out of the cut. Naturally, Mark Antony is indignant about this, but we can see that it is no time to be speaking to Cæsar about such matters. We can see that Cæsar is carved up quite some, and is in a bad way.

Of course we are not greatly surprised at seeing Caesar in this condition, because for years he is practically no price around this town, what with this guy and that being anxious to do something or other to him, but we are never expecting to see him carved up like a turkey. . . .

Shall work this into something for the S.T., ending with a reference to those "ever-loving" wives Portia and Calpurnia.

Dec. 4 *Nouveaux Contes Scabreux*, No. 9. A hideous old Monday. buck is possessed of a fascination so compelling that he cannot get any of his mistresses, from washer-woman to duchess, to love him for his money alone. Pure Maupassant. Title: *Beauté plus qu'Inutile*.

Dec. 18 I spent last night, as I suspect millions did, lending Monday a cat-and-mouse ear to the radio and waiting for 11 30, the hour at which the *Admiral Graf Spee* must leave Montevideo. But probably few other people were simultaneously steaming their heads over a jug of Friar's Balsam (laryngitis) while keeping one eye on Stevenson's *The English Admirals*. The *Graf Spee*'s commander, Captain Langsdorff, has been blamed, I think wrongly, for not being another Sir Richard Grenville (R L S. had a fine answer to the man who complained that the story of the *Revenge* set a pestilent example—"I am not inclined to imagine we shall ever be put into any practical difficulty from a superfluity of Grenvilles." But the whole essay is well worth re-reading) There is no doubt, to my mind, that Captain Langsdorff, in scuttling his ship, did what suited us least. In addition he saved a thousand lives, and I am not moved by the argument that in a war of this size a thousand lives are nothing. At the same time, like everybody else, I was a little disappointed, as when one's adversary at chess resigns to avoid being mated. But the really monstrous part of the business was that I found myself regarding the whole thing as entertainment. The wireless, of course, was responsible. At half-past ten a voice announced that the *Graf Spee* had exactly one hour before she must leave the harbour; she was getting

steam up, and smoke was coming from her funnels. Then some Debussy. Next, at a quarter-past eleven, came the news that the pocket battleship was getting under way. "And now some light music, like the overture to a drama. Would the curtain ring up on time? If not, one more black mark for the B.B.C. ! Yet another example of the maddest phenomenon in this wholly mad world—that the filming or wirelesslying of an event, whether it is the Grand National or an attack in force on the Maginot Line, is held to be of more importance than the event itself.

Dec. 21 Captain Langsdorff's suicide shows the *Graf Spee's*
Thursday. commander at his full height. Since he was resolved to die in any event, there was nothing to prevent him making a bid for personal glory except consideration for the lives of his sailors.

Dec. 22 Letter from a friend in the country: "There are
Friday six evacuated children in our house. My wife and I hate them so much that we have decided to *take away* something from them for Christmas ! "

Christmas Eve. Dense fog Looking through the week's papers, come across a letter to *The Times* in which A. J. Munnings complains that Braque sees oranges square. Why not? I am not worried when Modigliani paints a woman sitting on a high chair with her chin in her hand and her elbow resting on the floor. The reason I'm not worried is that Eric Newton has taught me not to look for sense in pictures, but to listen to them as though they were music. In painting I can just about manage this; indeed, the picture I like best in my little collection is a de Pisis in which a man looking like Edwin Evans is walking into a free library with a tree growing out of his hat. I don't even pretend that this is the Tree of Knowledge !

Where I begin to jib is in music. *Pace* Ernest Newman, I fear I shall never be able to stop listening—I listen with pleasure to Scriabin and Poulenc and Milhaud—and substitute reading,

the matter to be read being the composer's musical thought. I jib still more when I am told that a poem can dispense with rhyme, metre, and even meaning so long as it discovers "evocative rhythms" and "image sequences." It isn't that I don't like some modern poetry. I like a little of it enormously. Straight, I do! I find much of Edith Sitwell imaginative and stimulating—in short, fun. But when in music I hear the atonal stuff I say like Antony to the Roman messenger, "Grates me: the sum" When I read Dylan Thomas's *January* 1919, beginning,

Because the pleasure-bird whistles
after the hot wires,
Shall the blind horse sing sweeter?
Convenient bird and beast are
lodged to suffer
The supper and knives of a mood,

I think of Coleridge's "To please me, a poem must be either music or sense, if it is neither, I confess I cannot interest myself in it." Compare John Betjeman's *Upper Lambourne*, which sings like Tennyson:

Feathery ash in leathery Lambourne
Waves above the sarsen stone,
And Edwardian plantations
So coniferously moan
As to make the swelling downland,
Far surrounding, seem their own.

That I should like *some* modern stuff in all the arts—to me Epstein's moderns are as sympathetic as Eric Gill's ancients are revolting—is of extreme importance. If I did not I should have to consider giving up my job on the *S.T.* The position of the dramatic critic who takes himself seriously is extremely delicate. His job is to encourage to the best of his ability whatever is new and genuine, and to refuse to be hoodwinked by the new and bogus. He must hold the door wide open, and shut it tight. He is at once explorer and watch-dog. About one thing I am absolutely determined. This is not to be afraid of saying No to pretentious rubbish because fifty years ago Clement Scott made a fool of himself over Ibsen.

Christmas Day. Fog-bound and unable to get to Monty's party, the second time I have defaulted in ten years. Fortunately Leo Pavia is marooned here with me, and has been for two days. Have never known anybody with more catarrh or wit, and I spend the day listening to his snuffles, gurgles, and *bons mots*. It is incredible that so much malice should have a background of so much childishness. He comes into the room saying, "There's a young woman at the Telephone Exchange who insists that it's six-fifty-nine exactly. I tried to argue with her, but she wouldn't listen." I then found out that he had rung TIM for the first time in his life and didn't know she was mechanical.

Boxing Day Leo departs. Cut 25,000 words out of the diary. Fog still bad in places, but manage to crawl to Café Royal for dinner.

Dec. 28 The sales of *Speak for England* amount to 2883
Thursday. copies. This figure, which excites Hutchinson's, leaves me unmoved. All my books go off with a bang, and then misfire.

Jan. 1 "He was not a great actor," bleats *The Times* of Monday. Benson, who died yesterday at the age of eighty-one. "He was not a great actor," brays the *Daily Telegraph*, and goes on to say, "Indeed, there will be few dispassionate judges to assert that he was even a very good one." What I should like to know is—how old are these obituarists, since Benson was not at his best after 1910? I took Jock to see him act at Hammersmith some eight years ago, and was sorry: there was no acting left. Ellen Terry says in her memoirs that as a young man Benson had not nearly so much of the actor's instinct as Terriss! But about him later on: "A good actor. Oddly enough, the more difficult the part, the better he is—I like his Lear!"

About Benson in his heyday I cannot, and will not, be dispassionate. He gave what, to a young playgoer, seemed tremendous things. The thwarted walk of Hamlet; the blood-encrusted, wholly barbaric Macbeth; the patrician in Coriolanus, the zoological, unsentimentalised Caliban; Richard Crookback delivering, "Come, let us to our holy task again!" in a gallery, and at the departure of the lords tossing the prayer-book into the air and so that it fell into the room below as the act-drop descended. I can both see and hear Benson come clanking on to the bare stage as Henry V, carrying a mace with a spike-studded ball swinging from it, and saying, "What's he that wishes so?" as though the fierce young King was in a real paddy with Westmoreland. He had four things most modern actors lack—presence, a profile befitting a Roman coin, voice, and virility to make you believe that Orlando overthrew more than his enemies. His vocal effects were astonishing; Pistol's "There roared the sea, and trumpet-clangour sounds" would have understated some of them. Benson always allowed Shakespeare to speak for himself *as far as was practicable* in the

case of an overworked manager and producer who was also leading man ; when he forgot a line he would fill in either with something from another play or some Shakespere-sounding matter of his own.

This brings me to the very odd business of *Richard II.* Of this astonishing performance—the finest piece of Shakespearian acting I have ever seen, whether the actor knew what he was up to or not—Montague wrote on December 4, 1899 :

There was just one point—perhaps it was a mere slip—at which Mr Benson seemed to us to fail. In the beginning of the scene at Pomfret what one may call the artistic heroism of this man, so craven in everything but art, reaches its climax. Ruined, weary, with death awaiting in the next room, he is shown still toiling at the attainment of a perfect, because perfectly expressed, apprehension of such flat dregs as are left to him of life, still following passionately on the old quest of the ideal word, the unique image, the one perfect way of saying the one thing. "I cannot do it ; yet I'll hammer it out." Everybody knows that cry of the artist wrestling with the angel in the dark for the word it will not give, of Balzac "plying the pick for dear life, like an entombed miner," of our own Stevenson, of Flaubert "sick, irritated, the prey a thousand times a day of cruel pain," but "continuing my labour like a true working man, who, with sleeves turned up, in the sweat of his brow, beats away at his anvil, whether it rain or blow, hail or thunder." That "yet I'll hammer it out" is the gem of the whole passage, yet on Saturday Mr Benson, by some strange mischance, left the words clean out.

And now for the sequel. With this wonderful piece of criticism in my ears, and being twenty-two at the time, I went during the week to see *Richard II.* Trembling with excitement, I persisted with the stage-doorkeeper until, after the fourth act, they let me into the presence. Reeling off as much as I could remember of Montague's criticism, I wound up by asking whether the omission of the significant line had been accidental. Benson heard me out with the greatest patience and politeness, and then proceeded to give me my first lesson in acting as an art which is instinctive rather than intellectual. He said that

it had never occurred to him to think of Richard in the light in which my critical friend presented him. *He had never thought of the unhappy monarch in any æsthetic or self-conscious connection whatever.* He had never regarded him as a *poseur*. He had viewed him—I forget now in exactly what light Benson professed to view his own creation. Something about Gibbon and the Decline and Fall! Upon my insisting on an answer to my question, he smiled, and said he did not attach importance to these particular words, and had left them out intentionally!

I went back to my seat, and the words were again omitted. Then, either to make amends, or for sheer plaguing's sake, Benson recovered the missing line and gratuitously pitchforked it into the text at a place where the insertion did not make too great a hash of the sense.

I have been studying how I may compare
This prison where I live unto the world ·
And for because the world is populous,
And here is not a creature but myself,
I cannot do it ; *yet I'll hammer it out*,
My brain I'll prove the female to my soul ,
My soul the father ; etc , etc.

is the passage in which occurred Benson's sin of omission. He repaid it thus :

Music do I hear ?
Ha, ha ! keep time. How sour sweet music is
When time is broke and no proportion kept !
Yet I'll hammer it out
So is it in the music of men's lives. . . .

Well, there it is ! All I shall say further of this great actor and Englishman is that for forty years he brought Shakespeare's music into the lives of hundreds of thousands of young people. "The isle is full of noises." For forty years the English provinces rang with those "twangling instruments" which were the tones of Benson's voice. They gave us infinite pleasure, and hurt nobody except, possibly, their enunciator, late on Saturday night, after a hard week's work. If I had the choosing of Benson's epitaph it would be Othello's "I have done the state some service."

Jan. 12 The music at the Benson memorial service was from
Friday. Bach, Purcell, Beethoven, and Elgar. All very noble
 until a well-meaning actor weighed in with some
 unwanted Frances Allitsen.

I suppose one must say of these unpaid tributes what Balzac's Madame Colleville said when her daughter Céleste refused to sing after the elegant and almost professional Comtesse Torna de Godollo: "On chante comme on chante!" My copy of *Les Petits Bourgeois* is still the one Brother Edward passed on to me as part of a pact made forty years ago, whereby I have the present onus and custody of the fifty volumes of the *Comédie Humaine*, ultimately the property of the survivor. Edward was always a great underliner, and it is always the same note that he underlines:

Ce jeune homme avait ce qu'on nomme en province de la dignité, c'est-à-dire qu'il se tenait raide et qu'il était ennuyeux.

Affreuse condition de l'homme! il n'y a pas un de ses bonheurs qui ne vienne d'une ignorance quelconque!

M. de Châtelet avait commencé sa carrière par la place de secrétaire des commandements d'une princesse impériale. Il possédait toutes les incapacités exigés par sa place.

Toucher aux choses de théâtre est une des ambitions éternellement vivantes de la petite bourgeoisie.

Jan. 18 At one time I contemplated a series of Flaubertian
Thursday. "Gigantesques." If the project had materialised

I should certainly have included this from an advertisement column which I saw to-day:

Coty Talc makes ordinary undies feel like finest silk, and silk undies feel like the passionless caress of an angel.

Jan. 23 Re-reading Archer's Introduction to *The Master*
Tuesday. *Builder*, come upon this Frightful Warning to Critics
 to Stick to their Last:

Substantially, the play is one long dialogue between Solness and Hilda; and it would be quite possible to analyse this

dialogue in terms of music, noting (for example) the announcement first of this theme and then of that, the resumption and reinforcement of a theme which seemed to have been dropped, the contrapuntal interweaving of two or more motives, *a scherzo here, a fugal passage there.*

Italics mine.

Jan. 31 Bitter cold. Even with fires burning in four rooms
Wednesday. I have had to put on my hat before venturing into other parts of the house.

Feb. 1 Willie Richardson is dead, at the age of seventy-seven, and the Savage Club is much upset about it. He was the general butt; not to tease him would have been thought odd, and we are wondering if we were not sometimes a little unkind. But I think Willie enjoyed being plied with drink and persuaded to recite *Lochinvar*, which he did with enormous energy and gusto. Indeed, his intensity could be quite frightening. But then, in his insignificant way, Willie had very great dignity. He was tiny, *chétif*, poorly clad, and when he sat in the library writing it was, a wag said, like mice frisking in the wastepaper-basket. Nobody knew for what publications he wrote, though obscure encyclopædias and the unreadable compilations that lie about hotel smoking-rooms were suspected. Nor did anybody know where he lived, or on what. We guessed that his private life had been tragic. I saw him two nights before he died, sitting in the hall waiting for a taxi to take him to hospital. With his feet tucked under him and his chin sunk in his thin claret-coloured muffler he looked like a schoolboy awaiting reprimand. I talked to him for a minute or two, trying to cheer him up, and thinking of Lamb's "You are just boat-weight. Bless me, how *little* you look!"

Feb. 5 To my great grief my old friend Monty Shearman
Monday. died last night.

He was the ideal travelling companion, and during my many holidays with him I was frequently reminded of Johnson's

saying about Burke: "His stream of mind is perpetual." I recall an absurd incident when we were returning from Marseilles. It was during a heat-wave. The first thing Monty did on getting into the railway-carriage was to divest himself of jacket and waistcoat. Leaving me to look after the valuables, he then strolled off to the bookstall, whereupon the train started in the characteristically casual way of all French trains. Appealing to the guard, I was told that actually the train was in two parts, the second following ten minutes later. Yes, both trains stopped at Avignon, and if my friend was quick he would be able to dart from one platform to the other. Alas, Monty's bulk was not made for darting! The same thing happened at Lyons, where it had become distinctly chilly. I realised that Monty was wearing the thinnest of silk shirts and light flannel trousers, and that I had all his money. Unrescued till the train got to Paris, he sat all night, dinnerless, and huddled in a blanket borrowed from a steward. Despite his great frame M. was never really strong, and I saw at once when we got to Paris that it was a case of hot brandy and bed.

There is nothing to add to St John Hutchinson's admirable account in *The Times*, except possibly a note as to Monty's aloofness. With a mind richly and variously stocked he had great stores of reserve, and his friendship was not had for the asking. He demanded—how shall I put it?—*integrity* in his friends. He did not ask that they should be intellectual, for if you thought sincerely he did not mind how inadequate your apparatus for thinking was. Nor moral, for here his code began and ended with kindness towards and consideration for others. He was, as one could tell him to his face, something of a snob, and he would laughingly agree if by that you meant that he prized what Westminster and Balliol gave him. But try to get Monty to a rout merely because it was fashionable or expensive, and his contempt was freezing. He was not often angry, but his anger was a thing to be feared, and I never knew it roused unworthily. He inherited a fortune, and here he took a stand for which I immensely respected him. Money became a bugbear with him. He had this confidence

in his friends—that they would have stuck to him if he had been penniless. And he repaid this confidence by leaving wealth out of his relationship with them. With this strength of mind he combined a great-hearted, spontaneous generosity. He dispensed charity abundantly, and by stealth. He was a good man.

Feb. 10 "Ladies and gentlemen," said somebody in Saturday. Cochran's new revue last night, "I have the honour to announce Miss Cora Pearl!" Apparently the name meant nothing whatever to our younger critics chattering this morning about "the queen of a night-club in the days of bustles and crinolines," "an Edwardian music-hall artist," and so on. To-day's young know-alls do not seem to be aware that Cora was an actual person whose real name was Emma Elizabeth Crouch. Born at Plymouth in 1842, Emma was the sixteenth child of the ex-seaman and Westminster chorister Frederick William Crouch, composer of *Kathleen Mavourneen* and of two operas entitled *Sir Roger de Coverley* and *The Fifth of November*. Some time after the birth of Emma, Crouch deserted his wife and family and went to America, where he served in the Civil War on the side of the Confederation. (See Grove.) Emma at the age of eight was sent to a boarding-school at Boulogne. She stayed there five years, returned to London, appears to have served an industrious apprenticeship as a trollop, and at fifteen persuaded her lover, Bill Blinkwell, proprietor of a dance-hall, to take her to Paris, where she remained to become the greatest courtesan of the Second Empire and go to bed with everybody including Prince Jérôme Napoleon.

No two accounts of Cora agree. According to Charles A. Dolph, her father died in 1847 when Cora was five, whereas Grove gives the date of his death as 1896. Cora in her memoirs supports Dolph, alleging that her mother married again while she, Cora, was at school, "to have a supporter for the children of the past and a father for those of the future." Good for Mrs Crouch! Cora, according to a French journalist of the period, was possessed of "un chic merveilleux, un chien endiablé,

un esprit blagueur, une rosserie supérieure et, pardessus tout, une science de l'amour élevée à la hauteur d'un grand art et d'un culte surhumain." According to the Baroness von Hutten, who wrote an excellent little life a few years ago, Cora wilfully accentuated her coarseness and vulgarity, which she raised to the power of a new mode—*le genre d'écurie*. An editorial note in the *Daily News* of July 17, 1886, confirms this: "Cora had the manners of the stable."

Leo Pavia, who is sitting with me as I write, tells me that Cora was a great friend of his Aunt Sophie (see my entry for November 6, 1938). They met in 1867 at the Bouffes-Parisiens, where Offenbach's *Orphée aux Enfers* was being revived, and Aunt Sophie was in the chorus. Of Cora's part in this production Dolph says :

Cora wished to take the part of Cupid. All Paris was there to see and hear when she made her appearance in the scene on Olympus. A crown of roses was on her head, and her costume consisted of a short gauze tunic, very *décolletée*. When she began the well-known verses, with a strong English accent,

Je sous Kioupidonne, mon amor
Ah fait l'école boussonière . . .

the noise was deafening, and drowned all further words. While the smart set applauded frantically, a number of students in the galleries, who had come to protest against "la morale outragée" and "imperial corruption," began whistling and hooting. Cora replied by putting out her tongue and sneering at them. This went on every night for a week, the noise being heard outside in the Passage Choiseul, while the public paid fancy prices to see the show. Finally, one evening, Cupidon had enough of it, and advised the manager that she would not appear again.

Of Cora's rapacity there has never been any doubt. I once saw in some American film-magazine a photograph of Theda Bara bending over a skeleton. Underneath was written, "She picks 'em clean, does Theda!" So did Cora. There was a certain Baron Abel R. who, after Cora had turned him into a physical

and financial wreck, left Paris and started a soap and candle factory at Civit  Vecchia, near Rome. Alas for the Baron! Let me quote my contemporary French journalist again: "Jamais mouton de f te-Dieu ne mit plus de complaisance   se laisser conduire par son saint Jean-Baptiste que Gazonal   ob ir   cette sir ne." Let us hope that the poor plucked Baron had the wit of Balzac's M ridional and could say with him, "J'en ai eu pour mon argent." Then there was the millionaire son of a butcher. This infatuated youth, after squandering eight million francs on Cora, shot himself in her drawing-room. Whereupon, first complaining of the state of her carpet, Cora ordered her coup  and drove behind the stretcher to the hospital. But the young man did not die, living long enough to become head of the famous Restaurants Duval, founded by his father. The younger Duval died in 1922, when the London *Times* described him as "the last link between the Empire and the Republic. Everyone knew M. Duval, and everyone liked him. No *premi re* or race-meeting was complete without him. He wore the red ribbon of the Legion of Honour." Two days after the shooting incident Cora was expelled by the French Government, which, she said, was like banishing a public monument or a boulevard. She was subsequently turned out of Monaco, and years later returned to Paris to find that she had outlived her vogue. She died of cancer at 'the age' of forty-four. Among the handful of people who followed her coffin were the Baron and the restaurateur! In her memoirs Cora states categorically that she never preferred one man to another, and that her interest in each and all of her lovers was confined to his bank-balance. In so far as her character had no redeeming features Cora was a Conqueress for whom Fielding would have claimed real Greatness. She kept the flag of British gallantry flying over Paris, according to the calculations of an actuary of the period, to the tune of fifteen million pounds! Nor is "over Paris" a mere metaphor. In Algar Thorold's life of Labouch re occurs this: "In another letter Labouch re gives an amusing picture of the worried English *charg  d'affaires* immersed in official trivialities: 'A

singular remonstrance has been received at the British Embassy. In the Rue de Chaillot resides a celebrated English courtesan, called Cora Pearl, and above her house floats the English flag. The inhabitants of the street request the Ambassador of England, a country the purity and decency of whose manners is well known, to cause this bit of bunting, which is a scandal in their eyes, to be hauled down. I left Mr Woodhouse consulting the text-writers upon international law, in order to discover a precedent for the case!" This letter was written in 1870, during the Siege.

Feb. 17 At the Café Royal the talk was all of the rescue
Saturday. by the destroyer *Cossack* of the 311 Britons from
 the Nazi prison-ship *Altmark*. Happening on the
very day the *Exeter* arrived home, this is a rounding off as a
great story-teller might have imagined it. Let me recapitulate.
The *Graf Spee's* prisoners reveal that their comrades on the
Nazi "hell-ship" *Altmark* are being subjected to semi-starva-
tion and every kind of ill-treatment and indignity. The Navy
makes a vow to "get" the prisoners. Weeks pass, and the
Altmark treks north, skirting the icebergs and dodging across
to Norway, where she begins to fiddle her way home. The
prisoners continually throwing messages into the sea, they
are battened down under iron hatches. An attempt at mutiny
fails, and the men are put on bread and water. At Bergen the
ship is searched by the Norwegian authorities, who either do
not want to hear the shouts of the confined men or cannot
hear because the *Altmark's* captain orders the steam-winch-
es to be turned on to drown the shouting. One morning a young
airman somewhere in England is hiked out of bed and told to
find the *Altmark*. He succeeds, Nature showing where her
sympathy lies by producing a day of brilliant visibility. The
airman tips the wink to a British cruiser and five destroyers,
"conveniently disposed," according to the Admiralty. Argu-
ment with two Norwegian torpedo-boats. Will they search the
Altmark in conjunction with the British? No. Our men wire-
less the Admiralty, who reply, "Go in and get the boys." The

Altmark's abortive attempt to ram, the boarding and the hand-to-hand fight in the manner of a hundred years ago, the rescue, the transfer to the *Cossack* of 311 prisoners, some having to be carried, the snatching by an A.B. of the *Altmark's* skipper's cap, the discovery that that amiable swine had meant to blow up the ship *with the prisoners on board*, the arrival at Leith—all this is pure Marryat! The thing about to-day's news which has fired the mind of the nation is the appearance of the Nelson touch in high places. "Go in and get the boys," the Admiralty ordered, leaving the nice question of territorial waters to be argued later.

March 7 A good war-time maxim: No day without its
Thursday. laugh! To-day has handed me a good one. This was when the *D.E.* got through to say that the office censor would not pass my article about how I spent last Sunday at Bognor. "'Twas brillig, and the Bognor kids did gyre and gimble in the wabe" was the offending sentence. Didn't I realise that this was a clear indication that last Sunday had been a fine day? Didn't I know that there must be no indication as to weather conditions until after ten days? So I changed "last Sunday" into "a couple 'of Sundays ago," and all was well!

March 9 * Went last night to *Belle Vue*, a play by Francis
Saturday. James based on the Rattenbury murder. Performance possible because the Chanticleer is a private theatre and members can defy the Lord Chamberlain at the cost of a few shillings a year. I saw this trial, and remember thinking how irrelevant most of it must have seemed to the protagonists. Do you identify this suit? Were these the pyjamas? (Mrs R. had given her chauffeur-lover a new rig-out, which meant calling the tailor and haberdasher as witnesses.) Probably it is only in such details that Old Bailey proceedings can have any correspondence to the drama as known to the participants. To a man and a woman overtaken by Justice while still in the throes of a grand passion the court's

grasp of essentials must seem ludicrously weak. I should have perfectly understood if at any time in the proceedings Mrs R. had banged the dock-ledge and shouted to the court, "Yes, that's how such-and-such a thing seems to you *now*. But can't you see that it isn't in the least like the way it seemed to us *then*?" Or if, when asked how she, a woman in the thirties, could allow herself to fall in love with a boy of eighteen, she had rounded on her tormentor and said, "Suppose you were tied up to a woman old enough to be your mother? Suppose you fell in love with your secretary? Sentence me if you like, but don't ask imbecile questions!" Mrs R., and anybody else in her situation, might well plead that poetic questions cannot abide prose answers—an arguable view, given that lovers, ecstatic to the point of murder, must to themselves be romantic figures moving on a different plane from that of cut-and-dried depositions, rules of evidence, and all the rest of it. This must be so, since, while a tragedy is psychological, any court reconstruction can only be factual. And, of course, there is always the difficulty of explaining sex to a jury which shuts its mind to it, and a judge who has forgotten it. That Mrs R. was a tragic figure and not a mere slut was proved by her subsequent suicide.

March 10 To Bognor and Auckland—"last, loneliest, love-
Sunday. liest, exquisite, apart"—with Leo Pavia, having
sent Charles on ahead. This is the new boy, who
seems to be the right sort—"My name's Charlie, but I answer
to anything!" Nineteen, and cannot be called up for a year.
Leo in great form. "I'm sixty-five to-day. For the first five
years they despaired of my life; for the last fifty it's my death
they've despaired of!" I asked him about Elizabeth Robins's
quality as an actress. He said, "When I saw Robins I was
in my teens, and the impact of Ibsen was so great that it wouldn't
have mattered if Hilda Wangel had been played by Louie
Freear!" But he was very cross indeed with a young film
critic who has been scorning the notion of casting Robert
Taylor for the part of Brahms in a picture about Clara and

Robert Schumann on the grounds that B. was a snuffy, dirty old man with a beard: "Doesn't the young fool know that at the time of Schumann's death Brahms was only twenty-three, and that when he fell in love with Clara he was a good-looking, well-set-up young German of twenty? When I opened the door to him at Leschetizky's one day in 1893 he was sixty, and then he did answer your friend's description!"

March 11 Leo still in good form and temper. Began to-day *Monday*. by asking whether one should correct mispronunciations in others. I said, "Only when they are our social equals." To which Leo at his most Johnsonian: "To correct the lower orders is useless and therefore unkind. To instruct our own class is impertinent. To put right the people who hold themselves to be our social superiors is more than a duty: it is a pleasure."

Bognor is going to be good for my vanity. Nobody recognises me here, and my name in the shops causes no stir. That the war should put one in one's place—*on avait compris ça*. But to be obliterated by Bognor! It occurs to me that perhaps I am now, for the first time since I was a boy, leading the life which the ordinary man accepts as normal. Take yesterday. Got up, shaved, breakfasted in dressing-gown, read papers, strolled along promenade a cypher among cyphers, lunched, snored over a book while Leo snorted over another, tea, cinema, supper, bed. Fabulous creatures like George Robey, Sydney Carroll, George Whitelaw, Strube, Duggie Furber, and Guy Church are said to dwell in the neighbourhood, but have seen no trace of them. George Mathew, whose paper has been moved here, comes down on Wednesdays and Thursdays only. Apart from him the dullness is absolute, like the power of Boris Godounov.

March 23 I was sitting in the kitchen talking to Fred when *Saturday*. the door of a cupboard reaching to the floor began, very slowly, to open. That my "fell of hair" did not rise was due entirely to the absence of fell. After an immense

time, some five minutes perhaps, the door opened sufficiently to permit my tortoise, Whoopee, waking from winter sleep, to make her *rentrée* into polite society.

April 5 The wireless commentator spoke this afternoon of
Friday. the thirty "boys" who do the horses in the Grand

National as being the most deeply concerned in the race. This is the first time I have seen this obvious truth insisted on. I am quite a long way down in the list of Ego's owners! How difficult, by the way, is it to control one's thoughts! I have not worried about giving up the car and never think about motoring, though in the normal way I should have done some ten thousand miles since September. But whenever out of a railway-carriage window, or from the top of a Bognor bus, I see a field I at once fall to thinking about horses and to hankering after my old hobby. I ought to be worrying whether civilisation is going to survive. Instead I am continually asking myself whether I shall live to see another Olympia Horse Show. I should dearly like to know whether the yearling filly I bought at Henriques' sale has really grown into the miracle of two-year-old loveliness Albert writes about. But I am not going to sharpen regret by going to see for myself. Am not alone in this matter. To-day everybody has some nostalgia he keeps quiet about.

April 7 Read Frank Smythe's *Edward Whymper*, which has
Sunday a successful defence of climbing from first principles.

Also a well-thought-out analysis of the reason why Whymper was not a great as well as an extraordinary man. The author finds this in the lack of spiritual attunement between Whymper's actions and his thoughts. I have always been strangely fond of accounts of mountaineering. Strangely, because I have never had the nerve to attempt the thing itself, and doubt if I should ever have had the necessary skill, strength, and endurance, or been able to overcome my fear of heights. As a boy I helped to recover the bodies of two young men killed on Great Gable, and what I saw then put an end to any notions

about climbing. To this day I am not comfortable among mountains, though completely fascinated by them.

Fascination sticks out of this book everywhere. I am fascinated when I read that the minutes of the official inquiry at Zermatt were not available until 1920, nine years after Whymper's death and fifty-five years after the accident. I am fascinated when I read the entry in Whymper's diary made five days before his death on September 16, 1911: "Sent word by the hotel porter to Fred Payot that I wanted to see him, and he came at 8.30 P.M. We discussed the likelihood of those who were lost on Mont Blanc in 1870 appearing about this time at the end of the Glacier des Bossons, and gave him instructions what to do. He assented to go with me in search." I am fascinated too by the laconism of the end. Whymper made the foregoing entry on September 11. On the 13th he writes, "Did not feel at all well towards the end of the day." After which he locks himself in his room, refuses to allow anyone to come near him or to see a doctor, and on the 16th quietly dies. Without, says Smythe, any premonition of the end.

I once met a nephew of Whymper's. It was at Boulogne, during the last war. We were both going on leave, but a gale in the Channel held up the boat service. I remember him as the most brilliant metaphysician I have ever argued with in a high wind. He told me that his uncle was only once injured in a climbing accident. This was when, mounting the steps of a lecture platform and possibly over-stimulated by the occasion, he fell and broke a leg!

April 8 *Nouveaux Contes Scabreux*, No. 10. Based on a conversation I had years ago at a suburban dinner-party. My neighbour, who appeared to be wearing Gertrude Jekyll's gardening boots and looked like one of the Old Ladies of Llangollen, said, "Tell me, Mr Agate. What is a sadist?" I said, "Imagine that somebody climbs a tower and from the top of it pours molten lead into the navel of an infant pegged out on the ground below. That would be an act of sadism, and the perpetrator would be a sadist." The old lady said, "He would have to be a good shot!"

April 10 In the little play at the Gate Theatre called *The Wednesday. Jersey Lily* Mrs Langtry is made to allude to an epoch in which the dressers of star-actresses were invariably their mothers: "You can't think what a bad dresser my mother would make." The Prince of Wales, to whom this is said, answers, "Mine would be rather good." Later the Prince, now King, says, "Lily, you are the only woman who never tried to get anything out of me." This is *le revers de la médaille*. Mrs Langtry once told me that King Edward was extraordinarily "near," never gave her a halfpenny, or a present. Taking up a small gold snuff-box, she said, "This is the only thing I ever had from him, and I had to ask for it." Towards the end of her life, round about 1926, I frequently saw her at first nights, by which time, with her hair done up in sky-blue baby ribbons, she had become a ruin reminding one of Haddon Hall. In her early days she had that beatific expression characteristic of Victorian prettiness—like a sheep painted by Raphael; Mrs Kendal was the plain version of the same thing. The piece itself is a sentimental story. The egregious Captain Langtry, her husband, having committed suicide, the Lily is shown as cherishing a sincere passion for Prince Louis of Battenberg. There is a good scene in which the Prince of Wales endeavours to keep these lovers apart, not because he wants the Lily for himself, but because single they are a beautiful actress and a great sailor, and united they can only be two nobodies. The Lily then does what is expected of her and renounces her romance for ever, while remaining as faithful to it as is permitted by a royal friendship most delicately touched on, and by a second husband who is not touched on at all. In real life she was a poor actress, and knew it. Her passion was racing, where she was more successful, winning most of the important handicaps and the Ascot Gold Cup. I remember one night at the Theatre Royal, Manchester. Discovering her going through some papers on the hero's desk, the villain said, "What are you trying to find?" Looking up at the gallery, Mrs Langtry said, "The winner of the Liverpool Cup," in which her horse was running next day. Whereupon the Manchester gallery,

which took itself seriously as a play-going entity, booed and hissed. One way and another she made a lot of money, and left close on fifty thousand pounds. Jock's printed comment on this fact, seen in the light of this play, is, "She was rich, but she was honest." In the front row were Esmé Percy, and his mother. Esmé is fifty-two, and as I passed him I said, "You're much too young to remember any of this." He said, "Mamma doesn't, so how can I?"

April 11 Thursday. Hugh Walpole asked Jock and me to lunch at 90 Piccadilly. No other guests. Hugh at his pinkest and most cherubic. He and I jabbered incessantly; Jock, with more sense, devoted himself to the food and drink, with an occasional "That's right" and sometimes "That's wrong." Afterwards we dropped our cigar-ash into a wooden bowl painted by Gauguin, and admired Hugh's latest acquisition—the scarab ring which Wilde never stopped twirling throughout the trial. He has bought, by the way, the smaller of Monty's two Matisses. I told him that, out of excess of delicacy, when going through the final proofs of *Ego 3*, I suppressed my parody of his Lakeland style. He was indignant at my thinking he might be hurt, and made me promise to insert the pastiche in my entry for to-day. Here it is:

" 'Twas early morn. The dew was still on the grass, and the grass was still underneath the dew. Presently the sun would get hotter and there would be no more dew. But the grass would remain. When the dew had gone the grass would be dry, and Susan Saddleback would be able to sit down. She decided to wait. Below her was the lake of Derwentwater. Behind her were the fells, to the right the jaws of Borrowdale, to the left the pikes of Langdale. Above her, both right and left, was the sky. At her feet were larkspurs, raising their heads to salute first the songsters and songstresses of the waking day, and second the peaks of the lakeland hills which held her as rapt as they had done a week come Tuesday. Susan was nothing if not self-analytical. Why, she asked herself, whenever she glimpsed Great Gable did she always think of Clark?"

May 4 At the play last night Peter Page whispered, "What
Saturday. a good job that bomber fell on Clacton among the common herd and not on Frinton, where the nice people live!" Suspecting a leg-pull, I did not reprove him. At Rule's afterwards Bruce Belfrage offered me the part of Lord Steyne in the B.B.C. version of *Vanity Fair*. "Said my voice was just right." Five performances at fifteen guineas a time and expenses to Manchester, where they are doing it. I refused (1) on the high moral ground that it would be doing an actor out of a job, and (2) for the reason that the money wasn't enough! All the same, I should like to have played the late Marquis of Hertford's great-great-uncle, or whatever he was. I knew Hertford well—he was the most Furbankian of creatures—and even better when he was the Earl of Yarmouth, or "Y," as he was known to his friends. When he became "the most noble" he moved out of town for cheapness' sake. An extremely queer, saturnine-silly fellow, so bred out that he could hardly walk. One should take people as one finds them, and he was more than kind to me when I was ill at Torquay, where he lived.

Nos. 11 and 12 in my *Nouveaux Contes Scabreux*. No. 11 introduces a world-famous male dancer, whose impresario, to regularise his position and with an eye to the London County Council, marries the young man's mother.

No. 12 is suggested by this afternoon's perusal of Ursula Bloom's *The Log of No Lady*: "Aunt Mabel still retains her virginally nice mind. Sex has never reared its ugly head under her merino combinations." Am calling this *The Log of No Gentleman*.

May 6 Can English poetry be translated into French?
Monday. I have been reading Félix Rose's *Les Grands Lyriques Français*, and here are a stanza of Keats's *Nightingale* and its alleged French equivalent:

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
 No hungry generations tread thee down;
 The voice I hear this passing night was heard
 In ancient days by emperor and clown:

Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
 Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
 She stood in tears amid the alien corn ;
 The same that oft-times hath
 Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
 Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

In M. Rose's French :

Un chant comme le tien est un don immortel
 Abolissant le temps et la nature même.
 Tel il fascina rois ou manants, tel
 Il me retient captif, ton unique poème.
 Peut-être ton ardent et suave invocation
 Frappa de Ruth l'oreille et le cœur nostalgique,
 Et, l'arrêtant parmi l'étrangère moisson,
 Fit monter à ses yeux les pleurs d'un vœu magique ?
 Oui, souvent à nos yeux n'as-tu pas évoqué
 Les féériques visions de pays oubliés ?

To my English ear this is not good French poetry. And then it omits too much. I find nothing here of casements, perilous seas, and foam. To prove that it can be done, if not perfectly at least with stricter regard for one's author, here is the last verse of Hugo's *Booz Endormi* :

. . . et Ruth se demandait,
 Immobile, ouvrant l'œil à moitié sous ses voiles,
 Quel dieu, quel moissonneur de l'éternel été
 Avait, en s'en allant, négligemment jeté
 Cette faucille d'or dans le champ des étoiles.

The translator of this *must* account for *immobile, ouvrant l'œil, dieu, moissonneur, l'éternel été, faucille, champ, and étoiles*. Here is my effort :

And Ruth did ask,
 Motionless, rapt, lifting her eyes half-veiled,
 What harvester of summer all unflown,
 What parting god had negligently thrown
 His golden sickle on that starry field.

That, in my view, is at least near-poetry, and it gets in all the words. I sent it to Félix, who has not felicitated !

May 10 Germany invaded Holland and Belgium early this
Friday. morning.

May 11 On my way to luncheon at the Three Arts Club
Saturday. saw placards announcing the bombing of Brussels, Antwerp, Lyons, and other places. Prepared *facetiae* seemed a bit empty after this, and my old friend Princess Marie Louise, in the chair, made matters worse with a fine, classical, and, I believe, impromptu oration based on the events of the morning. It required some nerve after this to switch on to Women's Hats. But I had nothing else ready, so had to rely on Helen of Troy and Gertrude Stein to pull me through. Which, I think, they did.

At the Café Royal to-night heard of Chamberlain's resignation, and that the King had sent for Winston. Let's hope that Charles II's line in Shaw's new play, "I sometimes wonder whether young Jack Churchill hasn't the right stuff in him!" turns out to be a good omen.

May 14 Dinner and bridge at Gordon Williams's. The
Tuesday. Moiseiwitsches there. Annie told us of a beautiful spoonerism by Daisy Kennedy, Benno's first wife: "I will now play a Chocturne by Nopin!"

May 18 The reactions of my household during this first
Saturday. week of the real war have been characteristic.

FRED: Has spent the time playing about with bricks and cement to no apparent purpose; the result, in my opinion, is to make the dug-out unnecessarily strong for splinters and not strong enough for a bomb. CHARLES: I came into the front room and found my house-boy waltzing to the gramophone. JOCK: Greatly concerned about the destruction of his beloved Holland and badgering me with this question: Would I, to put an end to war for ever, sacrifice my life, see my work obliterated, and myself totally expunged from the scheme of things? Is vastly shocked when I modestly say I

should like time to consider my answer. It appears that Hugh Walpole, John Gielgud, and all Jock's friends would jump at the chance of such an honour. To which I retort that there isn't going to be any honour; if his question is to mean anything the sacrifice must be anonymous. Jock still seriously shocked because I refuse to say yes at once. Not satisfied even when I say I hope I shouldn't be such a skunk as to refuse. MYSELF: At the beginning of the week complete *frousse*, or, if I must put it in English, wind up. Took myself in hand with some measure of success, largely owing to a timely recollection of that passage in which Johnson tells Boswell that to attempt to think down distressing thoughts is madness. A man so afflicted must divert such thoughts and not combat with them. Boswell asking whether a course of chemistry would be helpful, Johnson said chemistry, or rope-dancing, or anything which would provide a retreat for the mind. Mrs Crupp's remedy ran on similar lines: "You are a young gentleman, Mr Copperfull, and my advice to you is, to cheer up, Sir, to keep a good heart, and to know your own value. If you was to take to skittles, now, which is healthy, you might find it divert your mind." Johnson and Dickens, bicarbonate of soda, bromide, a certain amount of resolution, and the news that the Germans are being held, for the moment at least, are responsible for my being reasonably restored to-day. One must keep something in reserve for the air raids, which now seem certain. By the way, Bernard Darwin's article yesterday had a passage of wider application than he perhaps meant, except that writers should be given the credit of their implications:

It has often been pointed out that when you are a hole or two down in a golf match as long as you do not crack you keep your opponent on the stretch, and that if the tension goes on long enough it is he who will crack. It is a lesson that we can never take too much or too often to heart, and these magicians of table-tennis inculcate it as well as anyone I ever saw. Golf is not, as are most others, a game of direct attack and defence; but the power of defence, of dour, obstinate resistance, is nevertheless beyond all price.

Hitler, I think, must be puzzled by the British character. Here we are, with our backs to the wall, fighting for our lives, and all the cliché-ridden rest of it, and yet finding time to turn up at Lord's in our hundreds to watch twenty-two young men disporting themselves at cricket. The B.B.C. *versus* the Balloon Barrage.

May 24 Lunched with Francis Sullivan at the Coq d'Or.
Friday. Came across this in Sydney Smith :

There is not a better man than Lord John Russell; but his worst failure is that he is utterly ignorant of all moral fear; there is nothing he would not undertake. I believe he would perform the operation for the stone—build St Peter's—or assume (with or without ten minutes' notice) the command of the Channel Fleet: and no one would discover by his manner that the patient had died—the Church tumbled down—and the Channel Fleet been knocked to atoms.

May 25 Brother Edward writes :
Saturday.

There is *no power on earth* will jockey me into despondency. Luther, Buckle, Kant, Spinoza, and Hegel teach me that there is an ethical law of balance which rules the world—and the equipoise will be adjusted; though, perhaps, not in our time. But what does that matter?

The efficacy of prayer? I incline to Spinoza's view. We may be perfectly sure that German pastors are invoking the aid of God at the same moment that our English vicars are doing *their* bit for *our* side. But it is presumptuous for *any* mortal to attempt to force the Almighty to a decision.

Nay, further (says Spinoza), God *cannot* make such decisions, any more than He can be angry, repentant, cruel, forgetful, callous—for all those are purely human qualities and imply weakness. But God is perfect; and in perfection there is no place for weakness.

Therefore, I wholly deprecate this consecration of certain Sundays to prayer. Oh, for a John Knox, a Wesley, a Jeremy

Taylor! And if Spinoza is wrong, and God *can* be influenced, I should expect the following answer (to us) from Him :

"Help yourselves first, before you ask My help! Suppress the inanities and futilities of your amusement abodes; cancel your horse-racings, and your circular careerings of greyhounds. Gape no more at what is but an illusory piece of celluloid; neither shuffle your feet to the battered assault and pathetic drone of your strange instruments. Then I may think about it!"

E. A.

May 27 Monday. In Jeremy Taylor came across this: "If our death could be put off a little longer, what advantage can it be in the accounts of nature and felicity? They that three thousand years ago died unwillingly, and stopped death two days or stayed it a week, what is their gain? *Where is that week?*" Grand English, specious argument! Where, on these lines, is any man's whole lifetime?

May 28 Tuesday. King Leopold of Belgium throws in his hand. All the B.E.F. in Flanders trapped. Something like eighteen divisions. Everybody is asking how many, if any, can be got out.

May 29 Wednesday. Hugh Walpole came into my box after the first half of *The Tempest* at the Old Vic to say that he had dined with a Big Noise who told him that we had already got 60,000 men away from Dunkirk, that the greatest military feat in history is now under way, and that it's a dead secret. Paid very little attention to the second half of the play until struck by Prospero's

The rarer action is
In virtue than in vengeance: they being penitent,
The sole drift of my purpose doth extend
Not a frown further.

This is pure *Manchester Guardian*. The snag, of course, is "they being penitent." Suppose the make-up of the defeated enemy does not include penitence?

June 2 Having no money is teaching me what Timon of
Sunday. Athens learned—that the only result of paying for
other people is their rage when it stops.

June 4 Great German attack massing in France.
Tuesday. Was tempted by a golden evening to go for a walk
on Hampstead Heath. Spent a couple of hours
watching the crowds. Went into Jack Straw's Castle for a
drink, and when I came out was amazed at the number of balloons.
Everybody in excellent spirits and very little war-talk.

June 5 The Great Attack launched.
Wednesday. Life goes on in the most extraordinary way. This
evening two hefty bricklayers of military age pre-
sented themselves, having been sent by the landlord to re-build
my garden wall, which fell down during the great frost last
winter. They had been putting up air-raid shelters all day, and
proposed to attend to my wall in their spare time. But is there
any spare time left? It seems to me that my wall should wait.

June 6 First proofs of *Ego 4* to hand just as the wireless
Thursday. announces the arrival of the last of the 335,000
men saved from Dunkirk. I hope and believe this
extraordinary mixture of private and public affairs will not be
confounded with the opening sentence of a woman's novel
arriving at the same time as the proofs: "It seemed to Gail
Partner a significant fact that the very day on which she accepted
Bill Cardew's offer of marriage England declared war against
Germany"!

June 7 From Brother Edward :
Friday.

I find Hegel's *Philosophie des Geistes* very comforting during
the "nächtliche, vier-Uhr-dauernde" air raids that we are
experiencing here. I don't understand a word of it. I
thought Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* a hard nut to crack ;
but it is a *fondant* compared with Hegel!

June 8 "Let Rome in Tiber melt!" said Mark Antony.
Saturday. Meaning that nothing was going to make him side-track Cleopatra. This afternoon I saw a landau drawn by two magnificent, high-stepping bays, and in it an old lady with purple veil, hat, sunshade, and the air and poise of Queen Victoria. She was obviously saying to herself, "Let London melt in Thames! Nothing is going to interfere with my afternoon drive!" It is only fair to add that the coachman was much over military age and the footman much below it. "Go it, old girl!" said the workman on the steps of St Paul's to Queen Victoria on her Diamond Jubilee. I was so much impressed with the spectacle of this old girl "going it" that I jumped into a taxi and passed and re-passed the cavalcade half a dozen times.

June 9 The great danger threatening this country at the
Sunday. moment is its army of sleek, supercilious Civil Servants. The proper thing to do is to sack the entire lot of smug, pompous, soft-hatted, soft-headed obstructionists, and replace them by hard-hatted, hard-headed, common little men from Lancashire, Yorkshire, and the Midlands, and Cockneys who owe their education to their mother-wit. Let History not record that the second Battle of Waterloo was *lost* on the playing-fields of Eton.

June 10 Every schoolboy knows what the weather was like on
Monday. the night before Cæsar's murder. Other than school-boys asked themselves what to-day's weather portended—a dense, Ancient Mariner-like, white mist with a small copper sun. I have never seen anything like it even in November, and it lasted all through this day on which Mussolini declared war on France. Is the Pathetic Fallacy less fallacious than we think?

A Week France has surrendered, and this country is back in
Later. 1805, 1667, 1588, 1066, or 55 B.C. If at this point I am expected to say something about the inviolacy of the British hearth and the sanctity of the British home, the

Union Jack in a word, I am afraid I shall disappoint. But as a dramatic critic I still retain my sense of good and bad style in drama. It is worse than fustian, it is untrue, to say that the future of this country is on the knees of the gods. It isn't. It is on our own knees. I do not believe in the Powers of Darkness except as a play.

July 29 Monday. There was a grain of truth in my old joke that Vladimir Cernikoff was a great Russian pianist who was neither a Russian nor a great pianist. Actually he was a French Jew born at Geneva; he once told me that he had never been to Russia and did not speak a word of the language. Nobody took him seriously as a performer; I never heard of Cerny playing with the orchestra, and his occasional recitals were only made possible by rich and titled patronesses buying blocks of stalls to which they sent their maids. But then, part of the social history of our time is concerned with the means of keeping Cerny out of the workhouse. There was some story of a wine-business, but it was not this which in his young days maintained him in luxury on the Riviera, lodged in grand-ducal villas and waited on by supercilious flunkys. After 1918 came *la dèche*, or what would have been destitution but for humbler though equally devoted friends. To say that a man hasn't a bob may only mean that he cannot afford to drink champagne more than twice a week. Cerny died, as he had lived since the last war, without a shilling. But then there was always some restaurant-keeper to stand by him. One such, in Soho, wept on hearing of his death.

"What about the money he owed you?" he was asked.

"Never mind about the money," sobbed the restaurateur. "Monsieur Cernikoff, 'e was a gr-r-eat gentleman!" Cerny was more than that; he was a courtier who had a genius for getting himself courted.

Six feet odd tall, with a bulk like Daniel Lambert's, he looked a little like Nikita Balieff and a great deal like Oscar Wilde. He had a round, moon-like face, a never-ending fund of natural, childish gaiety, a complete absence of malice—I never heard

him say an unkind word about anybody—and a magnificent manner. In his bow were all the Russias and all the Czars. A superb bridge-player, he hated being paid to-day with the cheque he gave you yesterday! Two little things come to mind now that he is dead. One was hearing Archy Rosenthal, at a party at Betty Ricketts's house, give an imitation of Cerny playing Mendelssohn's *Rondo Capriccioso* with every note doubled owing to the size of those giant fingers. Cerny, who was not expected, walked in and said, "My boy, you are playing very badly!" The other thing I remember was being driven down to the New Forest by Cerny in the Rolls some woman had lent him. We talked about Sarah Bernhardt, and he became so moved that he stopped the car and walked by himself a little in the autumn woods. Cernikoff had the soul of an artist, and on the morning I heard of his death I put on the gramophone my record of Schubert's *Wanderer* Fantasia, the slow movement of which he used to play more touchingly than anybody I have ever heard.

Aug. 5 My neighbours over the way have lost their ginger
Monday. cat. Which reminds me of Sir Daniel Ridgely in
 Pinero's *His House in Order*: "A cat, yes, I like
to watch a cat, occasionally." That is the whole point about
a cat, you cannot do more than watch it. You cannot make a
friend of a cat, because cats know nothing of gratitude or sym-
pathy or compassion or any kind of interest except self-interest.
Their disdain of man is so great that it excludes contempt.
We like dogs because they are, we say, "so human." Which is
tantamount to praising a dog for being non-doggy! Whereas
we recognise that a cat fulfils itself by remaining completely
catty. A mysterious dog would be an abomination; a mysterious
cat is right.

Aug. 8 From Brother Edward:
Thursday.

In York there are some evacuees from Durham. Though
provided with knife, fork, and spoon, they insist on eating

everything with their fingers. Further, they refuse to keep *in* a bed. They will sleep *under* it, or anywhere else on the floor ; but beds, they say, are for dead people—they aren't going to be laid out yet !

Aug. 12 Logan Pearsall Smith has this about Shakespeare's *Monday*. Sonnets : " The business of proving and re-proving, and proving over again—and then proving still once more, just to be absolutely certain—that our Shakespeare cannot possibly mean what he so frankly tells us, has become almost a national industry." This finds an echo in the current attitude to the author of *A Shropshire Lad*, where the proclaimed determination to get to the root of Housman's melancholy is equalled only by the resolve not to recognise the root when it is found. I have just been reading Percy Withers's *A Buried Life*. " We shall never know the truth," writes Withers, and after dismissing " a youthful infatuation of which the family had full cognisance at the time " attempts to assign the cause of the famous melancholy to another lady whom the poet, in his own words, " had loved and revered from youth." In the preface to *Last Poems* we read :

I can no longer expect to be revisited by the continuous excitement under which in the early months of 1895 I wrote the greater part of my other book, nor indeed could I well sustain it if it came. . . .

But in 1895 Housman, who was born in 1859, was thirty-six, and the cause of the " continuous excitement " of the early months of '95 can hardly have been the lady whom the poet had been loving and revering for years. This vital preface to *Last Poems* seems to have been seriously regretted. In an autobiographical note found after his death Housman wrote :

I did not begin to write poetry in earnest until the really emotional part of my life was over ; and my poetry, so far as I could make out, sprang chiefly from physical conditions, such as a relaxed throat during my most prolific period, the first five months of 1895.

THE YEAR 1940

This is singularly unconvincing. Yet the editor of *The Collected Poems* evidently preferred this lame afterthought to the admission in *Last Poems*. This admission, and the preface containing it, do not appear in the new and final edition of the poems. But is it not obvious to anybody who wants to find what he is looking for that the clue to the mystery is what happened—or, if you like, what was renounced—in the early months of 1895? I find it ludicrous to regard the repetition of the word “lad” sixty-eight times in sixty-three lyrics as evidence of a passion for a lass. Why the suppression of the earlier preface? Podsnappery, Pecksniffery, and Chadbandery, of course. What is Terewth? The terewth about *A Shropshire Lad* is the British public’s persistent refusal to believe that its sum can possibly contain a whisper of the thing that every line of it shouts from Clee to Clun.

Aug. 15 Poem sent me by a *Daily Express* reader :
Thursday.

What do I bring from market to-day?
A rose for my love,
A turtle dove,
And a pound of washing soda.

What do I bring to my love to-day?
A posy to hold,
A thought of pure gold,
And a cure for chilblains.

Aug. 16 A letter :
Friday.

DEAR MR AGATE,

I disagree with you on the point that a dog ought to be kept in its proper place. The proper place is its basket or kennel, and if it sits there quietly all the time, what is the use of it?

Yours sincerely

PAMELA (aged 8)

Aug. 24 Café Royal. Some Bloomsbury ass braying about
Saturday. platonic love, I told him of a letter which appeared
 in *The Saturday Review* some time in the 'nineties.
 The writer had overheard this conversation in a Paris café and
 taken it down :

FIRST COCOTTE. Mon ami me dit qu'il n'a pour moi que
 de l'amour platonique. Qu'est-ce que c'est que ça ?

SECOND COCOTTE. Je ne sais pas au juste, mais pour moi
 ça a l'air d'être quelque sale cochonnerie.

I once heard Edgar Jepson wind up a dinner-table discussion on
 the subject by saying in his dry, precise voice, "I know nothing
 about platonic love except that it is not to be found in the works
 of Plato." And I remember Leo saying about two Platonists,
 "They are always in a state of miserable enthusiasm about each
 other."

Aug. 29 Tosca at Sadler's Wells to-night strode on looking
Thursday. like Judy Smallweed as Phiz saw her—masterful-
 ness in a poke bonnet. Quite charmless, whereas
 what I chiefly remember about Sarah Bernhardt was the exquisite
 grace and comedy of her church scene. To-night's singer,
 who was stoutish and French, had to go through the murder
 scene in baby-blue satin, too tight round the thighs. Both play
 and opera depend upon Scarpia. In the play the acting must
 be of de Max's quality; in the opera the performance must
 be terrifying vocally. Scarpia's voice to-night was just not big
 enough, which reduced that villain to the dimension of some-
 thing out of Massenet.

Met Tyrone Guthrie in the interval, and had the sense not
 to tackle him on the subject of *The Kingdom of God*, the Spanish
 play about nuns with which, under another name, he is making
 the Old Vic stump the factories and collieries of Lancashire and
 Durham. Personally I cannot see that young women with
 the sap of life running high are performing God's will by
 immolating themselves. I cannot, and I will not, see that a
 laburnum-tree is praising God by refusing to blossom. Roman

Catholics seem to have no difficulty in believing this. But it would take more than a dozen Popes, arguing in shifts, to convince me.

Aug. 31 These air raids are beginning to interfere with the
Saturday. amenities, which is very wrong of them. Bob

Leaver and his wife were to call this morning at nine o'clock to motor me to Bexhill, but we judged it wise to wait for the All Clear at ten. Twenty minutes after leaving Croydon we ran into a second warning and had to shelter. The third happened ten miles from Bexhill but we heard no signal, and it was presumably during this raid that we collected the bit of shrapnel which we afterwards found, still warm, on the floor of the car. It must have come in through the roof or windows, all of which were closed when we sheltered. We spent the afternoon at Warbleton (1), a hamlet high up on the Sussex downs. Cloudless sky, a delicious breeze, and I sat contentedly about while Bob and Audrey gave an eye to April Farm—charming name!—left in their charge by two girl-owners now in America. Among the stock were two rather clumsy riding-ponies. But this was the first time I had seen horses—horses in a field, I mean—since the war. So I sat and smoked and looked them over as if they had been prize Hackneys. The fourth raid was at tea-time. Five miles from Croydon we had to put in for a slight repair, and I asked the garage-proprietor if he lived near at hand. He said, "Used to!" and pointed across the road, where all that was left of a little villa was the gatepost and the name "Figaro." Alas, it was Figaro here and Figaro there, a heap of rubble, a bit of wall, and the burnt-out remains of three motor-cars. The fifth alarm sounded soon after we got back to town, and there were two more before I finally got to sleep after the happiest day for months.

Sept. 1 I turn on the wireless and I hear: "It was a great
Sunday. moment when Stanley met Livingstone. But can it
 have been as momentous as when Bud Flanagan
 met Chesney Allen?"

Sept. 2 Leo Pavia presented me with a hat-brush with the
Monday. date 1845 dyed into the bristles. This was given to
 his grandmother by Rossini.

Sept. 4 I am about to enter on what may prove to be
Wednesday. an interesting experiment. Not feeling too happy
 about the top floor, I have descended for sleeping
purposes to the study. This was my bedroom when I first came
to Villa Volpone. And then things began to happen. About
six o'clock one Sunday evening Julian Phillipson and I were
sitting working in the drawing-room adjoining, with the door
open, when we both heard somebody come down the stairs. We
looked up from our work knowing there was nobody else in the
house and said simultaneously, "Who's that?" We went into
the hall and found nobody. We agreed that the stairs must
have creaked, and in creaking made a noise like somebody
descending. A few evenings later some friends were leaving
about one in the morning when we *all* heard the front door open
of itself; going into the hall we found the door open. Very
well then, the latch was a loose one, and somebody had failed to
shut the door properly. Waiting up for me one night Fred Leigh
"could have sworn" he saw "something" in the hall. He
went to meet "it" and "it" vanished. Obviously Fred's
nerves! On another occasion in the hall I saw a shadow come
between me and the light with nothing to cause it. I put that
down to indigestion, which is always playing tricks with my
eyes. Next I started to hear footsteps, lots of them, in the hall.
When I opened the door, nobody. All right, I had been dream-
ing. Next I felt a tug at my arm. Imagination! Finally, I had
gone to bed and was just dropping off to sleep when I heard two
tremendous blows on the floor immediately over my head, like
the *coups* of the *régisseur* in a French theatre. A search upstairs
revealed nothing. This scared me, and I decided that something
didn't like my sleeping downstairs. So I chose a room upstairs
for my bedroom, and the same night fancied I felt a friendly,
approving squeeze on my arm. Imagination again. But no
further manifestations! During all this time there was nobody

in the house except Fred and me. If there are any odd happenings now that I have come downstairs again, I shall record them here.

Sept. 5 . Ego 4 published.
Thursday.

Sept. 7 Lunch at Lord's with Alfred Chenhalls, and had
Saturday. long discussion on how we are going to get Henry
Wood the O.M.

The biggest air attack launched on London to date started at 5.30 this afternoon and has been going on ever since, the time of writing being 2 A.M. From the roof of the Café Royal got a fine view of the blaze, the Tower Bridge being cut out like fretwork. In one corner of the foreground a large flag fluttered, making the whole thing look like one of those old posters of *A Royal Divorce*, Napoleon's cavalry against a background of red ruin.

Sept. 12 Brother Edward writes that he received Ego 4 in
Thursday. the middle of a painful bout of intestinal colic.
"I at once dropped a volume of Wordsworth, whose healing power upon the colon I was testing" He goes on

You have continued to spoil the frontispiece by that pointless perversity which is the despair of every tasteful mind. It would have been excellent but for those unspeakable spectacles which, henceforth, will for ever be at a loss what to do—seek to maintain their perilous poise, descend with a thud upon your unexpectant nose, or, at the first prick of an ear, simply fall off. *When you are not eating, do you wear your dentures on your chin?* Your second photo transcends the boundaries of freakdom—it is an offence, grotesque, cretinous, *seabreux*.

The comments on the book itself are on the whole disappointingly kind.

Sept. 14 Brother Edward again :
Saturday.

York
September 13, '40.

I am the crux of page 53 and the fact is not duly indexed. For this omission, I proceed to drop my delayed bomb.

P. 243. *Booz Endormi*.

You seem to think that translating poetry is a form of cab-washing. It is not. "And Ruth did ask." You don't get the force of the French reflexive *se demandait*; besides the "did" is obviously a make-weight. Similarly, "rapt," which does not appear in the original.

Sous ses voiles. This phrase refers to the garments of Ruth, not to her eyes. I don't like the false rhyme "veiled" and "field." "All unflown" does not give the force of the French *éternel*. And you must not put "negligently" down for *négligemment*. Finally, from the point of view of the versificatory rules of the iambic pentameter, I doubt whether your "Motionless, rapt . . ." line is allowable.

As for your original poetry. This is not cab-washing—it's lorry-driving. Unequal, unbalanced, pointless, bumpety, ramrod, helter-skelter, sprawling. But that sort of thing is typical of your whole crew. Self-sufficient, jealous, mean-minded, affected, superficial, snobbish, bumptious, false, ignorant, servile, double-dealing and—impotent. And there are people ready to spend eighteen shillings to listen to your cage-twitterings!

By God, Heine was right! Monkeys have as fully the capacity of speech as men. But, pained and distressed at the vacuity of human utterance, the Fuhrer of Monkeydom once published a decree forbidding all further converse among monkeys till the end of time, under penalty of losing their tails. *So wurde die Sprache auf ewig verboten*. And thus it is that, to-day, in the Zoos and the Tiergartens of the world you will see monkeys with full-flowing tails, monkeys with mutilated and diminished tails, and monkeys with hardly the stump of a tail. Those are the wise-obedient, the fractious-indiscreet and the downright revolutionary.

"If you're intelligent you're crackers," says my Yorkian landlady. Crackers? So be it. In the historical, philosophical, religious, biographical, topographical, romantic, poetic, and dramatic literatures of France, Germany, Italy,

Spain, Russia, Poland, Greece, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Belgium, and Holland, there is no author of repute I cannot place and whose chief work or works I cannot very likely mention. I will tell you *something* about him, as I can tell you roughly what is on the shelves of the Reading Room in the British Museum. "Know thyself," we are enjoined. I do; and as Macaulay felt he was called upon to learn German if only to make fun of German literature, so I feel myself called upon to twist the tails of some of you less than monkeys; and I'm doing it!

But, during the last thirty years, whenever I—this poor remnant of humanity, this fluttering scarecrow draped on a couple of peasticks—have opened a wry mouth to make a literary pronouncement, my intended listeners have turned away to dust the mantelpiece.

THE MANTELPIECE!!!

Oh, mice in Africa!

E. A.

Sept. 17 E. C. Bentley, the inventor of the Clerihew, reviewing
 Tuesday. *Ego* 4, hints that it is about people who don't matter.
 I woke up this morning murmuring:

Mr Bentley

Said evidently

Whoever thinks Balzac, Beethoven, Benson, Bernhardt, Daudet,
 Duse, Flaubert, Ibsen, Maupassant, Meyerbeer, Montague,
 Wagner, Walkley, Wilde, and Zola among the dead, and,
 among the quick, Beaverbrook, Beerbohm, Cochran, Coward,
 Gielgud, Hambourg, Horowitz, Isherwood, Laughton,
 MacCarthy, Moiseiwitsch, Newman, Rachmaninoff, Sayers,
 Shaw, Sibelius, Stein, Tempest, Thorndike, Walpole, Wood,
 Zuloaga, and lots more matter

Is as mad as a hatter.

The *Daily Telegraph*, in which Bentley's review appeared, declined to print this modest little quip. Excuse—lack of space.

Sept. 18 How apt Dickens is to anything and everything
 Wednesday. that turns up. The Government having made a
 general issue of ear-plugs, I at once think of Betsey
 Trotwood with her magazine of jewellers' cotton. "'Some

local irritation, ma'am?' asked Mr Chillip. 'Nonsense,' replied my aunt, and corked herself again." When anybody says to me "That's a bomb!" I shall say "Nonsense," and cork myself again.

Sept. 19 Life in the dug-out proceeds as follows: Descend
Thursday. at 8 P.M. when the sirens go, rummy till midnight with Fred, Charlie, and anybody who happens literally to drop in, then sandwiches, then more rummy till 2 A.M., after which we catch as much sleep as we can. Jolly but crowded. Hamlet, when he counted himself a king of infinite space, reckoned on a nutshell to himself, not one among three or more.

"Things move violently *to* their place and calmly *in* their place," said Bacon. Provided, I submit, they have places to move to. Have decided to run away, a justifiable cowardice since I can do nine-tenths of my work as well outside London as in it. But where? I hear that there isn't a bed to be had in the Home Counties, and that at Oxford, for example, people are going from house to house asking to be allowed to sleep on the floor. Reactions to the notion of even temporary flight are odd. Leo Pavia, to whom I proposed ten days or a fortnight in Somerset or Devon, where the hotels are still advertising accommodation, flatly refused to budge, saying he couldn't bear to think what might happen to his house in his absence. I said I couldn't bear to think what might happen to mine in my presence. Finally, he said he wasn't in a holiday mood and shouldn't enjoy it.

I was cogitating about all this when the 'phone rang. It was Stanley Rubinstein asking if I would like ten days at his cottage in the Cotswolds; as he and the family have to stay in London the cottage is *as a matter of course* at the disposal of his friends. All Stanley's character is in those italics. He and José Levy are two of the biggest-hearted men I have known—both Jews, be it noted. Stanley said I should find two or three more lots of guests and we must sort ourselves out. Dispatching Fred Leigh to Wales, where his family is, and taking Charlie to look after me, I arrived at Cheltenham some time after midnight.

Sept. 21 Slept till noon and after breakfast took my bearings.

Saturday. A bus, two miles away, goes to Cheltenham every three hours, while there is similar communication with Gloucester and Tewkesbury. But there are bicycles, and a half-broken saddle-horse which the girls insist on riding and I won't. The elder is a great beauty who devastates aerodromes *à la* Zuleika Dobson, the younger is a tom-boy and promises fun. The house is half-timber. Lovely garden and orchard, huge wooden cider-press with a wooden screw ten and a half inches in diameter. Planes from the neighbouring airfield overhead all day long, and last night they laid a smoke-screen to make up for the balloon barrage blown away by last week's high wind. It seems that eleven bombs were dropped near the cottage ten days ago, and I point out to Charlie that this is better than one bomb dropped on Swiss Cottage ten minutes ago.

Sept. 25 Spent Monday and Tuesday getting off articles for *Wednesday. John o' London's, Sunday Times, and Daily Express,* three days before they are due, to allow for postal delay. Also a score of letters. The idea is to get some place within fifty miles of London and release Fairfax Road, with its fairly safe dug-out, for George Mathew or somebody whose work keeps him in London. Not too happy about sheltering here, where we hear almost nothing of the war. An enemy plane came over last night and dropped a parachute flare. But that has been all except a little gentlemanly popping of guns some miles away.

Sept. 26 To enter Tewkesbury Abbey is to be pitchforked
Thursday. into the thick of English and Shakespearian history. Richard Neville and Anne Beauchamp had two daughters, Isabel and Anne. Anne, the younger daughter, first married to the boy Prince of Wales, was, as we know, woo'd and won by Gloucester. The elder daughter, Isabel, in 1469 became the wife of George, Duke of Clarence, of whom since boyhood I have always held a wholly wrong view.

This for several reasons. The beauty of the name, the exquisite alliteration of "false" and "fleeing," and the fact that when I first saw the play with Benson the part was played by Frank Rodney, a schoolboy's image of manly grace and, in the golden wig and purple doublet and hose he used for Clarence, irresistible—all these things transfigured the mean fellow beyond recognition. In addition Rodney was a thumping good actor, and he delivered the Dream speech better than anybody I ever heard.

Which brings me to to-day's great thrill. "Would you like to see Clarence's bones?" asked Canon E. P. Gough, the Vicar of Tewkesbury, who was showing me round. A grid behind the High Altar was then raised, we descended half a dozen steps, and there in a dark hole some four feet above the floor—in the winter water floods the vault to the height of three feet—in an air-tight glass case, huddled together anyhow, were the skulls and bones of Clarence and his wife. It seems that after the legendary incident of the Malmsey butt, or whatever was the cause of death, Clarence's body was brought in state to Tewkesbury, where the funeral ceremonies lasted thirty-five days. And there, hugger-mugger, lies he whom Shakespeare made to say:

. . . then came wandering by
A shadow like an angel, with bright hair
Dabbled in blood; and he squeak'd out aloud
"Clarence is come; false, fleeing, perjured Clarence,
That stabb'd me in the field by Tewksbury."

I stopped for lunch at the Hop Pole in the town and copied out the inscription over the door, which wrenched me back to the modern world, at least as far as Dickens.

They stopped to dine, upon which occasion there was more Bottled Ale, with some more Madeira and some port besides, and here the Case Bottle was replenished for the fourth time. Under the influence of the combined stimulants, Mr Pickwick and Mr Ben Allen fell fast asleep for thirty miles while Bob and Mr Weller sang duets in the dickey.

We were a jolly party of four at lunch. The Canon and a retired bank manager called Stordy, who motored me over—he

looks and talks like Galsworthy except that he can see a joke and make one—the third being the delightful fellow, a close friend of the Canon, who some years ago sent me out of the blue an old print of my ancestor, Shuter the actor, which hangs over my bed at the Villa Volpone. The Canon, by the way, is restoring the Abbey hand over fist—*i.e.* removing and washing off the mistakes of former renovators. Everybody here says he ought to be a bishop.

Sept. 28 Letter from Alfred Douglas, beginning “Devour-
Saturday. ing time that blunts the lion’s paws has slightly modified my feelings of dislike towards you.”

Sept. 29 Stanley and Vera, who arrived on Friday night,
Sunday. brought with them Stanley’s aunt, aged seventy-two. Item, the latter’s sister-in-law aged eighty-seven. Item, the latter’s daughter, a charming lady who has been German, Swiss, and Polish by turns, is now without nationality, and has two sons in the South African Army. Item, a German refugee, a very clever girl, highly educated. This increases Stanley’s likeness to Traddles; and he clinches the resemblance by saying of the first two, “They are the dearest old girls.”

Joined at lunch to-day by Anthony Rubinstein, at school at Cheltenham and getting on for sixteen, and his friend Sambo—otherwise Rowland Smith. Also a Captain Byrne, a retired Gold Coast Governor, who once shot two man-eating lions in one and the same twenty minutes and to-day terrifies us with a tale of mysterious things called spiders’ webs dropped in the fields by Germans. I suggest that they are impregnated with the virus of foot-and-mouth disease, which suggestion is to be forwarded to the proper authorities.

After tea Stanley took me on a tour of the demesne. The village is in Domesday Book, the house is said to be the oldest in the village, a contention borne out by the herring-bone Saxon wall with two cat holes. In the east wall Stanley has preserved under glass part of the original wattle and daub. When the four or five Victorian wallpapers had been stripped off and the

kitchen grate pulled out, an old-fashioned fireplace came to light with huge bread and meat ovens on each side of it. In one of these was found a child's Elizabethan shoe. A treasure of a later date is Queen Victoria's Wheeling Chair, which found its way to Cyder Press Farm via Windsor Castle, Middlesex Hospital, and the Caledonian Market, a pedigree vouched for by a dealer well known to my host. As I was a little sceptical, my hostess produced the glazed chintz cover with the royal marking.

Sept. 30 Bertie van Thal's friend, John Byron the actor,
Monday. having found me rooms at Oxford, I am now installed where I have always regretted not being educated.

Oct. 4 Oxford is not the hub of modern culture I expected
Friday. to find it. Seeing two ladies vainly exhorting a dog to get into a motor-car, I prodded it with my stick, repeating Cyrano's command to Christian: "Monte donc, animal!" The elder lady gave me a severe look and said, "I think that was most uncalled for."

Oct. 15 TO G. W. STONIER
Tuesday. OF THE "NEW STATESMAN"
ON FAILING TO REVIEW "EGO 4"

Some people write for *Comic Cuts*
And some for journals tonier;
Some journalists the 'phone affect,
Others are even phonier;
Some seed must fall on stony ground,
But need that ground be Stonier?

Oct. 16 Dined last night at the Randolph with Archie
Wednesday. Macdonell, his wife, and Leslie Banks. The menu, which was the ordinary hotel dinner, much too elaborate for war-time. Hors d'œuvres, choice of soup, sweet-breads, partridge, sweet, and savoury. An admirable bottle or two of Pommard, a lot of good talk, and, what is rarer, good

listening. Archie said that the best talk immediately before the war was to be heard in Fleet Street during the lunch hour and at the table reserved for Bevan Wyndham-Lewis, Johnny Morton, James Bone, Douglas Woodruff, and Hilaire Belloc. He was too modest to include himself, though he might have done. He reminds me of that one of R. L. S.'s talkers who "bends ideas as an athlete bends a horse-shoe, with a visible and lively effort. . . . A Herbert Spencer who should see the fun of the thing." Told us that the wittiest impromptu he had ever heard was Bevan's description of Mistinguett as

A rose-red cutie half as old as Time.

Oct. 22 My brother Edward died on Friday last during an *Tuesday*. operation. He did not know the true nature of his disease, deep-seated and unsuspected, did not fear the operation, and had no mental suffering. Even if he had, he possessed the stoicism to meet it. He was buried in the family grave at the Unitarian Church at Monton Green, Manchester, and as the coffin was being lowered a near-by siren wailed. I thought of Macbeth's "Nothing can touch him further." Nothing could touch Edward at any time. He made for himself a way of living and was not to be turned from it.

On going through Edward's papers we found a letter to Jock dated July 6, 1940, and never posted. In it he writes :

As for me I feel an immense elation ; and conceited tho' it may seem, if I must disappear to-morrow, I feel that, possessed of 4s. 9d. at the moment, my work is done. You will understand. And now that I am getting morbid or super-courageous, you will see on the reverse side of this bit of paper that I have been reading sermons. *Immonde passe-temps ? Occupation incroyable ?* Read the quotations and ponder !

1. "When our Saviour was reared up aloft on the Cross that same hanging was very painful unto Him. But where He did hang here but for a time, if *thou* amend not thy life, thou shalt hang in the gibbet of hell for evermore."

John Fisher

2. "An ox will relish the tender flesh of kids with as much gusto and appetite, as an unspiritual and unsanctified man will do the discourses of angels."

Jeremy Taylor

3. "But as in the face of Death, when he lays hold upon me, I shall see the face of God, so in the agonies of Death, in the anguish of that dissolution, in the sorrows of that valediction, in the irreversibleness of that transmigration, I shall have a joy, which shall no more evaporate, than my soul shall evaporate—a joy, that shall pass up, and put on a more glorious garment above, and be joy super-invested in glory. Amen."

John Donne

Oct. 28 The *Times Lit. Supp.* in its leader on Boswell's *Monday*. bicentenary has this sentence: "There have even been boiled-down editions to tickle the palates of the half-educated." But half-education is better than none, and to ensure this is the object of these shortened editions of the classics. I myself have not time to read—and my business is largely reading—the whole of Karl Marx, Spengler, Mommsen, Einstein, Ouspensky, *Mein Kampf*, and so on, the result being that I have just had to dip inexpertly, whereas a summary of each would have enabled me to dip expertly. Of course such versions are not for anybody taking up economics, philosophy, history, and so on as a profession. Now apply this to letters. Books like Bailey's *Shorter Boswell*, or Pritchard's *Abridged Edition*, are not meant for people whose job is letters. They are intended for Army subalterns and the like, and are excellent little volumes, doing capital service.

Oct. 30 Dine with Meric Dobson, son of an ex-professor of *Wednesday*. Greek at Bristol University, at his rickety rooms in New Inn Hall Street. His sitting-room consists of a centre bit large enough for a dining-table; the rest of the room is made up of alcoves. Rather odd furnishings. Book-

shelves mostly Virginia Woolf and Arabic and Persian dictionaries—M. D. is translating Arab newspapers for the B.B.C.—divans so low you couldn't get a soup-plate under them; an immense gold picture-frame with nothing in it; a back-cloth which represents either Adonis before, or Lucrece after, the contretemps; three or four very elegant Empire chairs shabby enough to be genuine; candlesticks, beer-bottles, flowers, and a general air of mess and mind. Dinner cooked by M. D. and excellent. The other guests are a psychological novelist and a young medico walking the hospitals. Both have dates about ten—one with a plot, the other with a case—so I bag the room's one comfortable chair while M. D. squats on the flo by the rather tinny gramophone and replenishes it with well worn records of Beethoven's Ninth. Presently the novelist returns—presumably the plot has failed to turn up—and the three of us adjourn to my over-lighted room, where we drink whiskey and debate why the Jews, with few exceptions, have created nothing in art. "What about the Old Testament?" asks M. D.

Oct. 31 To the New Theatre to hear Leslie Hutchinson.
Thursday. There are two Hutches. The Hutch who bows his acknowledgments is playboy and exquisite—civilisation's coloured tops. This is the first Hutch. The second is the figure seated at the piano, and it can be a very credible imitation of primitive man. This Hutch sings such songs as might have fallen from the lips of Umslopagaas, or the executioner in *Salome*, or Masrur in *Hassan*, or the personal attendant of Ozymandias. The shades of eve falling fast, a third Hutch in a heliotrope lighting is presently telling us :

When I'm not crying,
There's rain in my eyes,
I am not to blame
If a few drops fall !

And then, with something like wit, there comes from his fingers a tinkle of "Jardin sous la Pluie." Now Granada is well enough,

and Debussy's raindrops are pretty enough. But have these quite the compelling power of the home product? Therefore the singer winds up with:

When the steeple bell
Says "Good-night! Sleep well!"

which hits off the English note to a nicety—the note of Oxford, early Tennyson, and the B.B.C. closing down.

Nov. 1 Dined with the Junior Proctor, Nevill Coghill, in
Friday. hall at Exeter. Addressed the Experimental Theatre Club.

Nov. 3 Peter Ustinov's Viennese opera-singer at the Players
Sunday is a grotesque whose ugliness, as Pater might have said, is a ravaged beauty wrought out from within upon the flesh, the deposit cell by cell, of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries. Here is one who has been a diver in deep seas, and keeps their fallen day about her. Creaking and bedizened, this scarecrow is pathetic because she too has not passed away, but is still of this world in so far as there is life under that powder, paint, false hair, and all the other cloaks to decay. She is like an Empire in ruins, and there is one of those great seventeenth-century sermons in the libidinous cackle which falls from her senile lips.

Nov. 14 Cheerfulness broke in early this morning, and for
Thursday. no discernible reason unless it was the bashing the Italians got at Taranto. I kept going from sitting-room to bedroom and from bedroom to sitting-room singing *à la Feste in Twelfth Night* "Oh, the fourteenth day of November!"

Nov. 15 Found something German in my mail this morning.
Friday. Opening it distastefully I read:

Es scheint meine zu sein. Ja, da ist der Riss, den sie durch den Sturz eines Gower-Street Omnibus in jüngeren und glück-

licheren Tagen davon trug. Hier ist der Fleck am Futter, der durch Explosion eines alkoholfreien Getränkes in Leamington entstand.

And so on. It was Teschenberg's translation of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, with the title *Ernst Sein!* (See *Ego* 4, p. 127.) Moncrieff has become Montford, Lady Bracknell is called Lady Brancaster, the gardener Moulton is given a line, and there is a new character, Mr Gribbsby, of the firm of Gribbsby and Parker, Solicitors. The play is in four acts, the second being divided into two to make room for the additional scene of Algernon's threatened arrest for debt.

Nov. 27 Letter from Leo Pavia :
Wednesday.

112 Netherwood Road
West Kensington, W.14
Nov. 24th, 1940

DEAR JAMES,

I know what a great admirer of the Civil Service you are, and here is the latest specimen of their admirable consistency and logicity.

I have occasion to apply for the *nth* time to a Government Office for employment in connection with German. On arriving there I am asked to translate a letter in German from one university teacher to another. I do this. I am patted on the back. I am then taken to see an elderly Major who says, Haw, haw, and remarks that there is a Snag.

MAJOR. You see, haw haw . . . we want experts on Bills of Lading. What do you know about Bills of Lading, Freights, and Invoices?

PAVIA. Less than the dust.

MAJOR. A pity. We want experts, business people who have been employed for years by firms dealing with Germany.

PAVIA. Excuse me, but why in that case do I have to spend half an hour in translating a letter from one professor to another?

MAJOR. That is the snag. If we gave the average applicant who is presumably used to Bills of Lading something of that kind to translate, he would do it easily: so we give him something in an entirely different direction!!

Only yesterday, meeting Ernest Fenton, did I hear of Edward's demise. Well, I said, another first-class brain gone; how few are remaining! You must notice that particularly at Oxford, which has always produced the finest second-class brains in the world. Edward and I ought to have collaborated, particularly in music—the blend of his vinegary Scriabinism and my too too luscious Italianateness would have been ideal. Poor Edward . . . I have been thinking of him all the morning; never was there such a Websterian creature, his mind was saturated with Graves, Worms, Corpses, Death, Funerals, and Skeletons. Something went wrong with him in early youth, and now I come to think of it I never saw him laugh—indeed I might say, humiliating as the confession is, that I never succeeded in making him laugh, probably my only complete fiasco in that direction. No man had greater chances in life, and no one threw them away with such a careless magnificence. He was like a certain type of bridge player who, when holding a series of fine hands, deliberately undercalls, expecting the fine hands to continue, when he will sit up and call for all he is worth. But alas!—the fine hands change into twos and threes, and the chance of winning is over. But let us agree that Edward bore his Yarboroughs with the same acid equanimity as in the dazzling days of Beecham's Kings and Queens.

London is a little quieter for the moment. That you know. My position is so precarious, I shall *topple over* before you return. All the little savings are gone, and I live supported (to revive one of my oldest jokes)—by Involuntary Contributions. It is of course monstrous that a person so variously gifted should not be able to find adequate employment. But then the whole age is monstrous, muddled, and mediocre, and you are trebly lucky to have Booked your Seat so well in advance of This Performance.

Write me a long letter. I may come to stay with you for a few days later on. I hear you lead a charmed life, dandling baby undergrads on your knee in the morning and playing bridge with elderly Dons in the evening. And whiskey, whiskey all the way.

This blasted ribbon is jiggered, so will wish you Long Life, *Mazal*, also *Berocha*.

Your old

LEO

Dec. 15 Letter to Leo Pavia :
Sunday.

148 *Walton Street*
Oxford
December 15, '40

DEAR LEO,

Thank you for what you wrote about Edward.

I wish I could ask you here. But there isn't a bedroom in the town, and landladies say "No visitors" in the tone in which old-fashioned mistresses used to say "No followers." Charlie would willingly sleep on the sofa and give you his room. But landladies are shy of sofas, which, it would seem, turn the most modest of us into Helioabaluses.

Have made some charming acquaintances, all very clever young men; they know so much that I toil after them like Time after Shakespeare. Am reasonably fêted, and dine at some High Table when I would sooner be supping at a low. I would give all Oxford for some dingy little pub in Victoria or Knightsbridge, and what galls me is that I could have the dingy little pub to-morrow if only I had the pluck to return to town. But I haven't. I am, at this moment, a more contemptible figure than I've ever been—doing nothing useful, saving my skin, and grumbling because I can't drop into my usual haunts. And, of course, prepared at any moment to write a patriotic article which would bring a lump into your throat. Yes, I think old man Ibsen would have found a place for me in the war comedy he would certainly be moved to write if he were living to-day.

I ought to be happy enough. Charlie is behaving admirably; Jock at Beaconsfield radiates goodwill and ideas; Stanley Rubinstein is in the best of tempers; I haven't seen a writ for weeks; I regret that Fred Leigh remains on the top of Cader Idris with Clara, but my asthma has been no worse. Yet I am as bored as Hedda Gabler, one of the reasons being that I miss my ponies at least as much as Hedda missed that saddle-horse. Wilde never wrote a truer line than

For he who lives more lives than one
More deaths than one must die.

Yesterday, however, was an exception. Archie Macdonell motored me to Bray, where Barry Neame was giving a luncheon-party to launch Maurice Healy's new book *Stay Me*

with Flagon. This is a wine book, and you know the kind of thing: "Claret is an intellectual wine." "I confess I find the Rhône wines lacking in a sense of humour." "Pontet Canet is the least temperamental of Clarets, always conscious of its duty to please and refresh." All this strikes me as nonsense but amusing.

We began with oysters and champagne, after which lobster mould, partridge, creamed mushrooms, toasted cheese, a white wine and six vintage clarets in magnums. I had on one side of me Charlie Cochran, in great form despite years, infirmity, and stagnation in the theatre world, and on the other the daughter of Charles Morgan's French translator. I thought of asking her the French for "perdurable hypostasis," but refrained.

In the evening I went to a musical party given by Nevill Coghill. About twenty dons and graduates. We began with a Sonata for two violins by Handel. Then a young woman, I think a Pole, played some Bach, Rameau, and Mozart quite well, after which came an earnest young man who treated us to Byrd on the virginals, which he prefaced by saying in a tone of contempt, "I can't think why you want to listen to this instead of some jolly, romantic stuff on the modern piano." I couldn't think why we did! Sandwiches and mulled claret. And then, just when I thought we were all going to talk, the pianist announced Beethoven's Sonata, Op. 110, after which, believe it or not, there was a duet for two recorders, actually recorder and violin, the sort of thing we shall hear a lot of if Clifford Bax ever writes a play about Mary, Queen of Scots. Last, Brahms' E minor 'cello Sonata, *magnificently* played by a young Russian girl. Coghill, whose party it was, is a man of great charm, a combination of Owen Nares, Young Brooke in *Tom Brown's Schooldays* and, as he says himself, the Apollo Belvedere.

Your

JAMES

Dec. 16 When I vowed to hold my peace about Bernhardt
Monday. and Duse, it was on the implied condition that other
 people held theirs. Now that Desmond MacCarthy
 has reopened the subject (by reprinting his old dramatic criticisms)
I hold myself absolved. "For my part I preferred the art of

Duse to that of Bernhardt. It was less imposing but more beautiful; it gave me emotions I valued more." I have no quarrel with this. My fight is with those who insist that Bernhardt was a personality-monger and Duse a noble creature who lay down and let authors walk over her. The truth is that Eleanora, every bit as much as Sarah, was a number one, top-hole egoist and personality-monger. "Signora Duse never stoops to impersonation. I have seen her in many parts, but I have never detected any difference in her." (Max Beerbohm.) Again, also Max :

Duse is artistically right or wrong according as whether the part enacted by her can or cannot be merged and fused into her own personality. . . . Resignation was Duse's note. Resignedly Hedda Gabler shot the pistol from the window. Resignedly she bent over the book of photographs with the lover who had returned. Resignedly she lured him to drunkenness. Resignedly she committed his MS. to the flames. Resignation, as always, was the keynote of her performance.

All this in spite of the fact that there isn't an ounce of resignation in Ibsen's Hedda, who is a predatory little minx. Jules Lemaitre pointed out that when Duse's Marguerite gave her heart to Armand "elle a même trouvé pour cela un beau geste symbolique, un geste adorable d'oblation religieuse, que Dumas *filan'*avait certainement pas prévu." Duse, you see, was playing Duse not Marguerite Gautier. Take the moment in *Ghosts* when the fire breaks out and Pastor Manders starts yammering about "a judgment on this house of sin." "Yes, of course," snaps Ibsen's Mrs Alving. The man is such a fool that she cannot be bothered to argue with him. Duse said, "Yes, of course," like a benediction. About her Paula Tanqueray Desmond writes : "She lent a suggestion of a pathos and depth of spiritual loneliness which was not in that shrewdly but narrowly conceived character." In other words, Duse pushed Pinero's character off the stage and substituted herself, which substitution was hailed by everybody as a miracle of sensitivity. Yet when Sarah did the same thing she was accused of exhibitionism. Why not admit

that the art of magnoperative acting consists not in going to your author but in making your author come to you, and that both Sarah and Duse were first-class show-women making the most of wholly dissimilar wares? I preferred the Frenchwoman to the Italian a thousand times, and I know which had the more difficult job. That Duse-esque mopings are infinitely easier than Sarah-esque tantrums is proved by the fact that while there have been near-Duses there has never been a near-Sarah. Louise Hampton's performance in *The Mother* gave to-day's playgoer a very good idea of what Duse in *Cost Sza*, or any other part, was like. A little more folding of the hands here, a little more unfolding there, and the result would have been Duse, or as near as makes no matter. Whereas I have never seen any performance which began to serve as a pointer to the other. That is my case against the view which pretends that while Sarah ran away from her authors and substituted herself Duse remained faithful to them. The truth is that Duse ran just as fast, but made such a show of sitting still that you failed to see her busy little legs.

1941

Jan. 13 Talked to the Playhouse company about *Hedda Monday*. *Gabler*. Have arranged to insert a leaflet in the programme of *Housemaster* to-night and every other night this week. A very imposing affair, four pages long, with the heading in bright red, "TAKE THIS HOME!"

Jan. 14 Only two copies of the leaflet were found on the floor *Tuesday*. after the performance last night, showing that the audience had obeyed my injunction. Query: Is the vulgar thing that works better than the exquisite thing that doesn't? This is a matter for the highbrows: I made up my mind about it years ago.

Jan. 15 Julian d'Albie has roped me in to help with the *Wednesday* production, in which he plays Judge Brack. My first shot at anything of the kind, and I find it very exciting. Full of problems, since the cast must be got *out of the company as it is* without any intrusion of guest-artists. Which means that since most of them are playing against their personalities, they have got to *act*. After some hours I got rid of much of d'Albie's charm, which is too genial, and got him to replace it by the cold suavity of your man of the world. Contrived, too, to persuade handsome John Byron's Eilert Lövborg not to look at his first entry as though he had just made a century in the Varsity Match. Mrs Elvsted, generally flaxen, is to be played by a dark-browed girl who looks like a gipsy. As she acts the part most sensitively I am not going to have it ruined by a wig which would turn her into a platinum-blond Jewess. So Mrs Elvsted remains dark which, since Hedda has Titian-red tresses, makes nonsense of the latter's remark about Thea's "irritating hair." But it's the lesser of two evils.

Jan. 17 Greatly shocked by the death of Archie Macdonell.
Friday. In London I had not known him very well, but here at Oxford we have been thrown together quite a lot. He paid me many little attentions, but then he went out of his way to be kind to everybody. There was a paradoxical dandyism about this huge, virile Scot, and at the railway station in the mornings he would stride along the platform with his red carnation smiling and his glasses frowning. His mere presence banished dullness.

Jan. 18 Went to town yesterday to see Donald Wolfit's
Saturday tercentenary performance of Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*. Wolfit has everything a great actor should have except classic features. As Othello, for example, he looks like a goliwog. Jock declares he is the best Shylock he has seen, and I say the same about his Falstaff, judging by the *Merry Wives* embodiment which he plays in a lovely shade of Matisse pink, or like Miss Mitford's description of her father in his vermilion eighties. Yesterday he had made himself up to look like a sentimental French postcard, in spite of which he was very fine, and in the death scene immensely moving.

Jan. 19 Stayed the night at Fairfax Road. Completely quiet.
Sunday. Took Pavia to lunch. When I told him that Jock and I held Liszt's B minor Sonata to be noisy rubbish, he said, "You're wrong, James. Some of it is quiet rubbish!" And he reminded me that when Liszt played it to Brahms the latter fell asleep, for which Liszt never forgave him.

Got back in time for the dress-rehearsal of to-morrow's play, much of which was a shambles. Consolated myself with the lovely dresses Tony Holland has designed and made for Hedda. The first is a white silk morning wrapper, the kind of thing Sarah would have worn as Théodora. The second is a snaky thing in greenish gold. The third is a black satin which, with Pamela Brown's Titian-red hair, is pure Yellow Book. The first dress, the white one, is the most ravishing thing I have ever seen on any stage. They tell me that I must not judge Pam by her performance to-night, that she needs an audience, when she takes

fire in all sorts of unexpected ways. I have arranged that she uses her reception at her first entry to stand stock-still and survey the Tesman lay-out with icy disfavour. Am having the last scene between Hedda and Brack played almost in a whisper (*a*) because of the presence of Tesman and Mrs Elvsted who are not supposed to overhear, and (*b*) because if the players have done their job they can afford to sit still and let the audience act the scene for them. And now all I can do is to sit still and wait for to-morrow.

Jan. 30 When I got home after the first night of *Hedda*
Thursday. Gabler I found my houseboy Charlie sitting up
for me with his calling-up paper in his hand. As
this was Monday night and he had to report at Blackpool on
Thursday, I had only two days to move back to London all my
belongings and some three hundred books accumulated at
Oxford. Being alone is my worst phobia, and I just could not
stay at Oxford by myself, while getting anybody from this vile
town to fill Charlie's place was unthinkable. Logically, of course,
one ought to compare the so-called amenities of Oxford with the
conditions in, say, Warsaw. But this doesn't work when you
must trudge to the station on foot at eight o'clock in the morning,
with a cutting wind blowing, and the necessity of stopping every
ten yards to get your breath. How Charlie's patience has stood
it I don't know; the boy has been wonderful. It has been im-
possible to get a taxi even by ordering it the day before, and
towards the end of my stay I have found myself hailing any
stray cab and riding round in it for no reason at all. I am there-
fore back again at the Villa Volpone, where I am rejoined by
Charlie back from Blackpool on calling-up leave. The per-
formance of *Hedda* was, I think, a success, but the rush of leaving
Oxford has driven it from my mind.

Feb. 11 He would be a spiritless creature whose heart was
Tuesday. not uplifted by the stature, bulk, and big assemblance
of that member of the team of Forsythe, Seamon, and
Farrell who makes her entry pushing a grand piano before her.

Madame Falstaff is a Gargantuan joy, a delirium of obesity. She is not content to be fat and stay fat ; she turns fatness to commodity. Her partner Forsythe treats us to a saga about a man's feelings on losing his chum, the mate of long standing who, when they were both toddlers, refused to let his friend down :

Though you couldn't swim
You jumped right in. . . .

Perhaps the thing I most admired about the lady was the gravity with which she endured and even helped to provide an accompaniment to this drivel. But WHAT a whoop did she emit the moment it was over ; the whale eructing Jonah can have been nothing to it.

Perfect contrast was provided by Mr Charlie Kunz, described as "Radio's Wizard of the Piano." On the principle, one supposes, of being heard and not seen, and even then very, very little heard. For Mr Kunz specialises in *piuissimos* that Pachmann never dreamed of. With the lid of the piano down, the popular songs about Moonlight avenues, Mocking-bird lanes, and Berkeley Square nightingales become ditties of no tone. There is no attempt to do anything with these simple tunes, to fantasticate them, or give them a new colour. They are just played very, very softly, and after every half-dozen or so the executant gets up from his stool and makes a contrite little bow.

My old friend Fred Emney might reasonably complain of having to follow these artists, for he, too, plays the piano, and has certain pretensions to girth. There is about this comedian a nice blend of admirable and historic qualities—the courtesy of a Chesterton, the disdain of a Chesterfield, and the breezy *bonhomie* of the type whose spirituous home is Leicester Square. In our grandfathers' day the only book Fred Emney could conceivably have perused was *Mogg's Ten Thousand Cab Fares*, always provided he could have borrowed it from Mr Sponge ; in our fathers' time he would have found his intellectual stimulus in *The Pink 'Un*. Whether he knows it or not this is a wonderful study of grandeur toppling into decadence. Beau Brummell

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in exile, Balzac's *Maxime de Trailles* buried in some distant province, Sir Toby keeping his fallen day about him—this beautiful player marshals before the mind's eye the half-pathetic, wholly grotesque cavalcade.

Feb. 14 Friday. A carpet divided Gilbert and Sullivan; Jock and I have split over a typewriter. After eighteen weeks of release from the damned thing—all the time I was at Oxford—he finds he cannot return to the old drudgery. I should have foreseen this. He was with me fourteen years, five months, and some odd days.

Feb. 22 Saturday. Shelter installed in basement at Fairfax Road. Roughly seven feet long by five feet wide by five feet high. Slept in it last night and very comfortable. The outdoor shelter is and remains flooded.

Feb. 26 Wednesday. Dined at one of the smartest houses in London—what a snob I am!—with the officers of a balloon barrage, and subsequently lectured to the boys in the cellar. Divided the talk into three parts—stories, an account of Jack Sheppard's last escape, and a reading from Stevenson on the British admirals. Went quite well.

March 4 Tuesday. A lady wrote to me one day last week to say she had been the purchaser at the sale of Mrs Patrick Campbell's effects of a bronze head of Sarah Bernhardt designed by Sarah as an inkstand and given by her to Mrs Pat. All the effects had been put into a miscellaneous sale and were not catalogued in any detail, nobody was there, there was no mention of Sarah as the sculptor, the Jew dealers didn't seem to have heard of Mrs Pat, with the result that my correspondent had secured this unique thing, with which were included two vases and a blotter, for ten shillings, and would I like to have it? This afternoon the lady came to tea, and turned out to be that excellent actress Sybil Carlisle.

The bronze is an exquisite piece of work. Sarah has portrayed herself as a bat with wings and claws. An admirable likeness, complete with tousled mop and the collarette she always wore. The shoulders carry masks of Tragedy and Comedy. Size, fourteen inches by twelve, signed "Sarah Bernhardt" and dated 1880. Deliciously French, Sarah having made a hole in the head to carry a quill. I have followed her intentions, and the figure now wears a plume as she did in *Le Passant*.

March 5 From a letter: "I have read *Egos* One to Four Wednesday. in rapid succession. Do hurry up with Five. Until this comes out life in Southern Rhodesia will be unbearable."

March 26 Luncheon-lecture to the women of Wolverhampton. Wednesday. When I arranged this I had forgotten that I should be in the middle of the Easter rush, when editors want two weeks' articles in one. The result was that I had to go by car, which cost half my fee. Income tax taking the other half—the Revenue does not understand abnormal expenditure due to pressure of work—I am about £2 out on the day. Audience wholly uninterested in what I had to say about the great players of the past. The whole visit was a mistake. But then I only undertook it in order to return via Wylde Green, my first glimpse of the farm since June 24, 1939. Albert has taken beautiful care of the horses. Ego fine. A bomb fell in his field without harming a hair of him, though it blew the window-frames out of the farmhouse a quarter of a mile away.

April 15 Reading Verlaine's *Invectives*, I discovered in *Mon Tuesday. Apologie* this moving thing which speaks also for my brother Edward:

J'ai vécu de toutes les puissances
Du cœur et de l'esprit bien mûris par l'été
Splendide du bonheur et de l'adversité.

April 18 Letter from Jock to James :
Friday.

The Micawber analogy must at once be dropped, since Mrs M. *never did leave Mr M.* I lately discovered that we are far more like the Gamps—the pre-Chuzzlewit Gamps before Mr G. demised. Mr G., you see, found it in his heart to leave Mrs G. only in the most drastic way possible. That typewriter is, it is true, a good three-fourths of the reason for our severing. But it should be said of Jock and James, as of the Gamps, that “words roge betwixt us on account of the expense.” And Jock may now say with Sairey G. : “My earnings is not great, Sir, but I will not be impoged upon.”

Reply from James :

MY DEAR JOCK,

So long as they don't liken us to the Smallweeds !
Ever,
J.

In this high spirit should all severances be conducted.

April 22 Time will still be flying.
Tuesday.

Gunner D. E. R. of the Canadian Army, pleading Guilty at a Borden court-martial to-day to being absent without leave from March 11 to April 12, was stated to have been absent eight times in just over a year. R. said he had been looking for relations and had found his Aunt Annie in Wimbledon. Then he visited his grandmother and “time just flew.”

Evening paper.

May 6 From a Manual of Etiquette in the 'Forties : “*In Tuesday. the library.* Care should be taken not to place books by authors of different sexes next to each other.”

May 8 Charlie gone. I shall miss him very much. Im-
Thursday. possible to imagine anybody kinder or more attentive.

May 11 Last night London had its biggest blitz to date.
'Sunday. From my attic window the view was one of beauty and awe. Against the glow of the distant fires the Odeon Cinema and other daytime-ugly buildings at Swiss Cottage stood out like the battlements of Elsinore. I could smell my neighbour's thorn and cherry trees, now in full flower, 'drenched by the full moon. Presently I heard drops of what in that empty sky could not be water. It was shrapnel, and I wondered what Debussy would have made of this garden under that rain.

May 12 I hear that much of Saturday's damage, which is
Monday. enormous, is owing to Cup-finalling and week-ending. The defect of the English quality, I suggest. Scores of fires allowed to spread which could have been stopped. The Houses of Parliament hit, also the British Museum. Much more moved by the destruction, all but the walls, of the Queen's Hall. This now presents the appearance of a Roman arena, and should be left as a permanent memorial to Hitler. Overheard to-day at the Ritz: "I'm not a snob, but I thank Heaven there are plenty of common people to clear up the mess."

May 24 The *Hood* sunk by the *Bismarck*. Thirteen hundred
Saturday. men killed in a land battle is an incident; a loss at sea of the same dimensions is a tragedy. The ship acts as proscenium.

May 25 "The pursuit [of the *Bismarck*] still continues."
Sunday. Yes, but will the couple of torpedoes we have put into her slow her up enough to let us catch her? Everybody doubts it.

May 26 News from Crete bad. Actually considered as book-
Monday. keeping, it would be better to keep Crete and let the *Bismarck* go. But sentiment is all the other way. Have spoken to several sailors to-day all of whom say, with complete conviction, "The boys will get her."

Pursuit still on. Hope getting fainter.

May 27 Tuesday. The first intimation I had was looking out of my window at about twelve-thirty and seeing a sailor come down the road, waving his arms and stopping everybody. "We've got the b——!" he said. Listened to the one o'clock news, and knew it was all right from the excitement in the announcer's voice.

May 28 Wednesday. America is in the war as near as makes no matter. Roosevelt is the greatest jockey the human race has known.

May 31 Saturday. Sat up late last night writing a long letter to Hugh Walpole, reported by *The Times* as having had a bad heart attack. I have ragged Hugh for years, unmercifully and in print, about being a slipshod writer, and the letter was an attempt to square accounts as between my affection for him as a friend and the plaguey business of disliking his handling of words

June 1 Sunday. Hugh did not live to get my letter. I heard the news over the wireless as I was waiting to begin a broadcast. We had some first-rate rows. In the summer of 1938 I wrote to Hugh offering him space in *Ego* 4 to explain why he had forbidden Macmillan's to send his new novel to the *Daily Express*. The letter ended "Come, you old badger, let me draw you." Hugh replied in due course, and there was a long rally, both of us coming up to the net to smash. But when it became necessary to shorten that book this correspondence had to go. I give Hugh's return of service here:

*Perran Bay Hotel
Perranporth
Cornwall*

July 24, '38

MY DEAR JIMMIE,

I don't want you to review my books and for two reasons:

1. I don't want you to review them because you don't read them. What you do is to open my new book, find a piece of English that isn't *your* English, pick it out, pillory it under

your fat caricature in your paper, make a mock or two, and so leave it.

Now, you are a first-class journalist and I always read you with joy, but I can never reconcile your serious, devoted attitude to the theatre and your flippant, casual patronage of current literature.

I *doubt* if you've ever read a *whole* book by anyone right through in your life! Have you? If so, what?

Now, you may be right in your attitude to current literature, but, as *you* know, a book *is* a book to the author of it. One has been a year or more living with it, caring for it, cursing it. Why should one deliver it over to some one who will certainly mock it without reading it? All the same it *would* be so delivered over were it not for the second reason.

2. I have a great regard for our friendship. It has had some ups and downs, but by now I value it for its entertainment value and because I like you. Now, I know that a contemptuous review by you who have *not* read my book will only make me, for a time at least, think you a patronising, job-shirking bastard. Of course you are *not* that, but I, in company with others whom you have mockingly patronised, would for the moment think so. As you are not that I don't want to think you are.

After all this you will think me super-sensitive and cowardly perhaps. I'm *not* cowardly, but I am sensitive where you are concerned—

and am

Your affectionate friend,

HUGH WALPOLE

Magnanimity came naturally to Hugh. Discussing Maugham's *Cakes and Ale*, he said to me, "I shan't forgive Willie easily. The beggar had drunk my claret!"

The reason I found Hugh unreadable is his *inexactness*. "A flock of angels cut the brilliant air like a wave breaking through mist." What would Macaulay have said if Montgomery had perpetrated this simile? Take that last article Hugh wrote:

I will confess that I would sacrifice my life, my books, my possessions, everything except my friends if in exchange I might have written *Alice in Wonderland*, Boswell's *Johnson*,

Wuthering Heights, the best of Hazlitt's Essays, or Hans Andersen's Fairy Tales, and gone down to history as the author of any one of them. The big banging masterpieces are so beyond me that I can't begin to think of myself as author of them, but Dodgson, Boswell, Hans Andersen, even Dickens, seem within chatting distance.

If this means anything it is that Boswell's *Johnson* and *Pickwick* are not "big banging masterpieces." "My mind floats in a kind of summer mist," wrote Hugh in *Roman Fountain*. Exactly! Amanda Ros described Delina Delaney as "sister to cloudy confusion." The moment Hugh took up the pen he became brother to that muddled young woman.

Balzac writes somewhere of "L'honnête artiste, cette infâme médiocrité, ce cœur d'or, cette loyale vie, ce stupide dessinateur, ce brave garçon." Heart of gold, soul of loyalty, tried and trusty friend—Hugh was all these, but the rest of Balzac's judgment would not be too severe. His tragedy was that his fine qualities have nothing to do with being a great novelist. With Desmond and all the other critics I may be mistaken about Hugh's final place in English letters. I *know* that he would not have bated a jot of his generosity, of his simple goodness, to gratify his lifelong ambition. He leaves a gap. His steady blue eyes, his willing smile, his resonant voice, his high scorn, his skill in banter, his sense of fun—all these things had become part of the fabric of literary London.

June 17 Leo Pavia has now installed himself in Jock's place.
Tuesday. Henceforth I look to find my typing witty, inventive,
 and, in inessentials, wildly inaccurate.

June 22 Germany invades Russia. There is talk of Hitler
Sunday. winning in three weeks.

June 25 A month ago I wrote an Open Letter to Any
Wednesday. Musical Critic bidding him come out in the open
 and tell us whether we must grow new ears to deal
with the atonal stuff, and how long it will take. Or whether

the old ears, properly adapted, will do. And how long *that* might be expected to take. I sent the article to the *Radio Times* and the *Listener*. The former rejected it because it was too long ; the latter because it was too short.

July 8 Tuesday. The curse of journalism is the temptation to turn everything into copy. In the end it becomes an instinct. At tea-time to-day Ted Elliott, my former chauffeur, blew in with an amazing story which I at once began to think of in terms of a *Daily Express* article. It took Ted six thousand words and two hours to tell his story, and my job was to compress it into six hundred words and five minutes' reading. Here is the result :

Ten stone of refusal to truckle summed up Ted Elliott when I knew him nine years ago. "Not for the Queen of Sheba ; road's too slippery !" meant he was going to push the old bus along at his pace, not mine. "Not if they were Roman emperors !" meant he wasn't going to say "sir" even to his boss's bosses, editors and such-like. So Ted left with a grin, maintaining that he wasn't the truckling sort. And presently I began to get postcards from all over the world—Rio, Capetown, Jamaica. Ted might be a deck-hand on a banana boat, but he hadn't truckled.

Hear now a story, a genuine tale of the sea, which is pure Conrad. Except that Conrad was too great an artist to have piled it on so thick. Tropic night, silence, the torpedo. And here is Seaman-gunner Elliott of Shepherd's Bush, with four broken ribs, being helped on to a raft by a passenger, a white Tanganyika policeman. Presently the ship's junior radio operator is hauled abroad. "Man's knowledge of the sea," says somebody, "begins when his state is reduced to a plank, a yard of sail, a biscuit, and a keg of water, when he himself is stripped to the elements of his soul." Our trio have nothing but the raft's boards and their own courage. No compass, no sail, no oars, no food, no water. By day no shelter from the liquid sun. By night no protection from the sharks, nosing round the raft's edge and, getting underneath it, trying literally to bump their victims off. Sit with knees under chin. Mustn't truckle to sharks.

On the fourth day, sighting something, they use the lid of a cigarette tin as heliograph. It is the U-boat which sank them. (What novelist would dare coincidence so preposterous?) Commander wears a Glengarry with its Army badge. Speaking perfect English, he tells them the drift has carried them sixty miles, and that in two days they must make land. Gives them water, biscuits, bottle of brandy, cigarettes, matches. No, he will not tow them, since that would drag the raft under. *Auf Wiedersehen*. A wave sweeps the biscuit tin overboard. Three days exhausts the water. Horizon still empty. No, the U-boat commander has not lied; the current has changed. And then follows a succession of those things which, we say comfortably, don't happen except in story-books. The vessel less than a mile off that doesn't hear them shouting down the wind. The flying-boat that doesn't see them. The hospital ship, lights blazing, whose attention they cannot catch, shirts being too wet to take fire. Eleventh day, radio operator dies. Twelfth day, fifth without water, Seaman-gunner Elliott becomes delirious. Stand-up fight on five-foot raft. Policeman k.o.'s Seaman-gunner. Thirteenth day somebody says something about a ship. What ship? Six stone of skin, bone, and salt-water boils—much too tired to bother about ships.

"I suppose you swapped stories?" I said. Ted nodded. "They didn't seem very funny. I'll tell you a funny one, though," he went on. "When I got my new suit at Liverpool on Saturday there was a bloke with me who'd been torpedoed before. 'Where do we change?' he said. '*In the billiard-room, as usual?*'" With a smile, "He wasn't the truckling sort, either."

Well, Seaman-gunner Edward Elliott, the opinion of *Daily Express* readers is that you and all of your kind should go on refusing to truckle. Keep it up, *Sirs*!

The B.B.C. called on Ted in the evening and got him to make a short record which is to be broadcast to-morrow.

July 13 "If she should break" it now! says Hamlet of the *Sunday*. Player Queen's solemn protestation. If he, meaning Hitler, should break it now, meaning the Stalin line! To-day is the day when, according to many, which included

me, Hitler would be dictating terms in Moscow. Which only shows the wisdom of excluding war speculation from the Diary.

Aug. 21 Have finished assembling *Here's Richness!* *An Thursday. Anthology of and by James Agate.* This is a defensive

measure brought about by the persistent neglect of the professional anthologists. Beginning with *L. of C.*, the reviews of my books have been of a kind which, as Allan Monkhouse once said, would have made Milton blush. "Aldebaran among pasty twinklers" (Humbert Wolfe). "He has vividness, wit, lots of perversities no more damaging to the total effect than were the bubbles and bits of dross in old stained glass; above all, he has that immense zest for the theatre and for life; all his wires are live, and they spark continually" (C. E. Montague). "His terrific gusto acts like a goad, while his torrential perceptions stir the sleeping philosopher in every reader" (Ivor Brown). "Agate has something of Hazlitt's gusto and romanticism and wilfulness" (J. B. Priestley). "There's no doubt about the readability of *Ego*, its glitter, its sense, its thumping good humour" (Hugh Walpole). "It is not enough to possess *Ego*. One would like to organise some graceful national demonstration in its honour" (Rebecca West).

But I do not ask for a national demonstration. All I want is a modest place in Mr X's *Good Reading*, Miss Y's *Good Writing*, and that new edition of *One Thousand Best Bits of Recent Prose*. Or were Rebecca and the others just lying? If not, then why do the anthologies contain no examples of my vividness and gusto, wilfulness and glitter? Years ago I prefaced a book of essays with a quotation from Rabelais: "Hence Mastiffs, Dogs in a Doublet; get you behind, aloof Villains, out of my Sunshine; Currs to the Devil. Do you jog hither, wagging your Tails, to pant at my Wine, and bepiss my Barrel? What, are you there yet? Grr, Grr, Grrrr. Avant, Avant! Will you not be gone?"

To-day I am a lamp-post against which no anthologist lifts his leg.

Aug. 29 The town swarms with strong healthy young Jews.
Friday. Are we to suppose that they have all been turned down by the Services? The real explanation is that in the art of being an *embusqué* the Jew has no equal. But then it is just this instinct, or talent, which has enabled him to survive at all. Sometimes the Jews make it very difficult to be as much pro-Semite as I am.

Sept. 5 May and Wilfrid have given me for my birthday the
Friday. old drawing-room piano which belonged to my grandmother. My earliest recollection is lying in bed at the top of our large house while up the well of the staircase came the aroma of my father's cigar and the sound of my mother or my aunt playing Mendelssohn, Chopin, Schubert (*Impromptus*), Schumann, Weber (*Concertstück*, *Invitation*, *Rondo Brillante*), and arrangements of *Norma* and *La Sonnambula*. They were both extremely accomplished pianists and had studied in Heidelberg under Heinefetter, pupil of Chopin and presumably a relative of the three sisters given in Grove, two of whom died insane. My aunt used to make us laugh with her imitation of Heinefetter, telling us how she too was a little mad and would start a lesson swathed in numberless shawls, discarding them as her temper rose. But, mad or sane, she taught her pupils to play the D flat waltz (op. 64) at the correct speed; this is about half as fast as it is normally played. My compliments to our modern virtuosi and, mighty fine pianists though they are, let me tell them they cannot play the Waltz as this grotesque creature, who learned it from Chopin, used to play it. Or make the appoggiaturas in the middle section sound like horses' hoofs on a moonlit road. Even when we began to grow up we were not allowed to study what were known as Mamma's and Auntie's pieces; they were sacrosanct, and it was right that they should be so. I remember the beautiful playing of my mother's old friend, Lizzie Pickering. "How do you like me?" she asked when I was about six. "Very much," I replied. And then the critic in me asserted himself for the first time: "All but your boots." I remember that this Miss Pickering went to Vienna to study

under Leschetizky and returned two years later with her old technique gone and no new proficiency to replace it.

I can remember Sunday evening hymns, the nursery-rhymes of Scott-Gatty, and, oddly enough, the piano score of *Patience*. I used to spend hours putting together a plot which should be a reasonable framework for the extraordinarily recondite lyrics. Why should Bunthorne be raffled? Why did Lady Jane accompany herself on so improbable an instrument? Why, why? Those were the days when children wondered but did not ask questions. Only one comic song was ever played on the old instrument. This was "Oh, Honey, My Honey," sung by May Yohé in *Little Christopher Columbus*, and brought from London by Sophie Klaus, a school-friend of Mamma's. I remember "Aunt Sophie" very well. She was a *great* beauty, in spite of the fact that as a girl she had had smallpox. But of a *chic* unknown in these days, a Victorian elegance that has gone. She had run away from Heidelberg to marry a handsome German adventurer arrested for forgery as they were leaving the church. "Aunt Sophie" never saw him again, and spent the rest of her life keeping house for three wealthy brothers who lived in Leicestershire, and hunted. There she enchanted everybody, as well she might, having the looks of Diana Wynyard, the poise of Ellis Jeffreys, and the wit of Kate Cutler. She lived to be well over eighty, and spent her last years in Battersea Park, where I visited her, and found her charm and elegance unimpaired. When such a paragon sanctioned anything, that thing, even if it was a coon song, became permissible. But there degradation stopped, and if we youngsters must indulge in the new craze for cake-walks we were bidden to confine that passion to the instrument in the schoolroom, or the wretched affair which my father bought to please my mother's first cousin, who lived in Warrington and dealt in second-hand grands.

The old instrument—Broadwood's told us that Queen Victoria bought the next number in the series—is still an exquisite piece of furniture. The elegant shape, the rosewood, the faded silk, the Henry Jamesian "tone of time," and the memories it evokes—all these go near to waking the latent Proustian in me.

Sept. 9 Sixty-four to-day. Lots of letters and wires, including one which hopes that my works will "survive posterity." A bottle of whiskey from my friends downstairs, a necktie from Ted Elliott (*q.v.*), and from Leo the vocal scores of Handel's *Solomon*, *Theodora*, and *Jephtha*. At lunch, where we drank "black velvet," he wished me many happy returns with peculiar sincerity: since, as he remarked, if there aren't any he will lose his job. Nothing from Jock!

Sept. 10 Tom Gamble is an exponent of the philosophy of perfect contentment. As Private Spuddy he is conscious of being the salt of the earth, and of having all earth's sweets in his grasp as well. Whoever wants more is Putting It On. This grand performance, which I saw at the Bedford to-night, is an epitome of homely joys, contents, and such minor dissatisfactions as must be accounted part of the daily round. Here is a superficially comic, latently pathetic actor with the gift of thinking aloud, and that power of wondering with which Lamb credited his old actor. Hear Private Spuddy on the meaning of work as seen by a worker. He is out of the Army, has taken a job as a waiter, and is haranguing his employer. "If you're going to be my guv'nor, be my guv'nor," he says. "If not, tell me, and I'll get some one else. You're only the boss. *I work here!*"

Sept. 12 Greatness in acting requires a combination of things not all of which are under the actor's control. Enough height and not too much; beauty, or if not beauty, then the power to suggest it; brains and the ability to conceal them; physical health and the nervous system of an ox; indomitable spirit and natural grit; the flair for the right opportunity; luck or the knack of turning bad luck to account; a ruthless capacity to trample on all competing talents; *a complete lack of interest in the drama except in so far as it provides the actor with striking parts.* In addition to all this the great player, male or female, must possess that indefinable something which makes the ordinary man abase himself without knowing why.

When, after her performance of *Pelléas* in Maeterlinck's play at the Theatre Royal, Manchester, Sarah Bernhardt walked through the winter garden of the Midland Hotel supported by two Florentine lackeys, hard-headed cotton manufacturers who had never heard of her stood up and removed their bowler hats, and common stockbrokers, abashed and open-mouthed, left their stories in the air.

Sept. 15 Came across this in De Quincey :
Monday.

Woman, sister—there are some things which you do not execute as well as your brother, man ; no, nor ever will. Pardon me if I doubt whether you will ever produce a great poet from your choirs, or a Mozart, or a Phidias, or a Michael Angelo, or a great philosopher, or a great scholar. By which last is meant—not one who depends simply on an infinite memory, but also on an infinite and electric power of combination ; bringing together from the four winds, like the angel of the resurrection, what else were dust from dead men's bones, into the unity of breathing life. If you *can* create yourselves into any of these great creators, why have you not ?

Let us look at some of these females in the playwriting world. There was Aphra Behn, of whom I am ashamed to say I never read a line. There was Susannah Centlivre, dismissed by Swinburne as being "dull as dishwater and monotonous as a bagpipe." There was Mrs Inchbald, who wrote nineteen stage plays the very names of which are now dust. There was Joanna Baillie, who, having drawn up a list of the human passions—Hate, Jealousy, Fear, Love, and so forth—proclaimed her intention of writing a tragedy and a comedy round each of them. Scott made the mistake of praising one of these productions, after which she never let the poor man alone, so that he dreaded looking into the Abbotsford letter-box. Even my darling Mitford saw nothing ridiculous in the notion of a genteel country-woman putting a *Rienzi* or a *Charles I* through his stage paces ; Macready tried to bring one of her tragedies to life, and failed. In the last century they all dabbled in the theatre, including

Mrs Hemans with some nonsense called *The Vespers of Palermo*. George Eliot couldn't let it alone; not even her consort, G. H. Lewes, could prevent the publication of her drama in blank verse, *The Spanish Gypsy*. The great and honourable and sensible exceptions to this theatre-itch were the Brontës and Jane Austen. I do not think that these ladies have been given sufficient credit for this.

Sept. 24 How odd theatrical producers are! Take the
Wednesday. scene in the third act of *A Doll's House* (Archer's translation):

RANK. But I'm quite forgetting what I came for. Helmer, give me a cigar, one of the dark Havanas.

HELMER. With the greatest pleasure. (*Hands case.*)

RANK (*takes one and cuts the end off*). Thanks.

NORA (*striking a wax match*). Let me give you a light.

RANK. A thousand thanks.

(*She holds match. He lights his cigar at it.*)

RANK. And now, good-bye!

HELMER. Good-bye, good-bye, my dear fellow.

NORA. Sleep well, Dr Rank.

RANK. Thanks for the wish.

NORA. Wish me the same.

RANK. You? Very well, since you ask me—Sleep well; and thanks for the light.

Obviously "thanks for the light" is addressed to Nora, and refers to the sympathy with which she has relieved his melancholy. In a notice of the recent production of this play I asked what the producer meant by allowing *Helmer* to light the Doctor's cigar? "The whole point of 'Thanks for the light' is that it is addressed to Nora." A week or two later I saw the play again. Helmer was still lighting Rank's cigar, and Rank was still thanking Helmer.

Oct. 14 Last night I had to meet a young man who wants to
Tuesday. know what I think of his singing. A professional accompanist had been engaged so that I should be impressed and hail the young man as a second Gigli. With a

skill which Talleyrand never approached I managed to get away without any expression of opinion whatever. But Leo told me beforehand that I had no need to worry, and that such cases are quite simple. "If the young man has no voice you say he has talent; if he has no talent you say he has a good voice; if he has neither you say he has charm; and if he happens to be well off you congratulate him on possessing all three."

Oct. 24 Letter from a soldier in Iceland describing the life
Friday. there as dull, dull, dull. Dull to the verge of paralysing mind and body. Can I suggest anything to relieve the tedium? Am sending the young man a cutting from the *Manchester Guardian's* entirely humourless Nature Notes:

"I wonder how many of our troops in Iceland realised their fortune in being stationed in summer where the harlequin duck, pink-footed goose, and both phalaropes nest.

Oct. 27 My dear godson, Tony Baerlein, has been killed. He
Monday. crashed on returning from a successful raid over Germany. Almost his first action. He had a first-class mind, and his manners were as modest as his brain was comprehensive. He had the makings of a good journalist, was intensely lovable, and even in Fleet Street had not a single enemy. "A spirit goes out of the man who means execution, which outlives the most untimely ending. All who have meant good work with their whole hearts have done good work, although they may die before they have the time to sign it."

Oct. 28 Went with George Mathew to Port Sunlight to address
Tuesday. nine thousand soap-boilers. I had visualised a soap factory as a Vulcan's stithy, with huskies stripped to the waist stirring chunks of blubber in vats of boiling petroleum by means of barge-poles. What I actually saw was two thousand natty young women dressed in white and smelling like a hedge in spring. The talk was relayed to the huskies, whom I did not see. Am told it went well, though in view of the young ladies I had to make excisions.

Nov. 3 Heard this story of the fine Greek actress, Paxinou.
Monday. On fire to play Mrs Alving, she sent for "X," a well-known theatre-manager, and made the proposal to him at the Savoy Hotel, coiled on a Louis Seize sofa *à la* Serpent-of-old-Nile and biting a flower *à la* Carmen, her arms cinct with diamond bracelets. Naturally "X" did not see her as Mrs A. "Come to tea at my flat to-morrow," she commanded. "X" duly presenting himself, the flat door was opened by a dour, hard-faced creature with hair brushed back and possessed of as much glamour as Sybil's Jane Clegg. "I want to see Madame Paxinou," said "X." And received the reply: "I *am* Madame Paxinou as Mrs Alving. Now do I play *Ghosts*?"

Nov. 17 Supped with Gwen Chenhalls, the only other guest
Monday. being Lady Oxford. Recalling a dinner with Coquelin in the late 'eighties, Lady O. said that the French actor justified his performance in *The Bells* by saying, "Irving would have been arrested twice a week: my innkeeper would never have been detected." Half-way through the meal she threw herself into an exquisite Pre-Raphaelite pose, saying, "That was Ellen Terry playing Lady Macbeth, supposed to be clumsy, square, red-headed, and Scotch."

Nov. 23 Jack Bergel, dramatic critic of the *Evening News*,
Sunday. was killed in a flying accident last week at the age of thirty-nine. I write in the *S.T.* to-day:

Life for John Graham Bergel was a bundle of leaping flames—music, the theatre, French and Russian films, Rugby football, good wine, motor-racing, bridge, golf. He would talk about the latest aeroplane engine in terms of the finale to Mozart's Jupiter Symphony, and very nearly about the symphony in terms of the internal-combustion engine. But I think that if you had asked him what he enjoyed most he would have said talk; he could not endure to be silent. He resembled that Fleeming Jenkin of whom Stevenson wrote: "The point about him is his extraordinary readiness and spirit. You can propound nothing but he has either a theory about it ready-made, or will have one instantly on the stocks,

and proceed to lay its timbers and launch it in your presence. 'Let me see,' he will say. 'Give me a moment, I *should* have some theory for that.' " With this difference, that Jack would not have required the moment; his stream of mind kept pace with his spate of chatter.

One Sunday morning shortly after the outbreak of war he called on me ostensibly to propose a day in the country but actually to obtain confirmation from an older colleague on a matter about which he was greatly exercised. Too young for the last war and not wanting to miss this, should he jettison his career and follow his instincts? *Where did his duty lie?* I held, rightly or wrongly, that in time of stress Fleet Street has need of its best-tempered brains, and that he must resist the romantic impulse. Some months later I learned that he was making desperate efforts to get into the Air Force. Continually turned down, he embraced the Air Ferry Service with passion. On his leaves he was gay and happy, while envisaging the probabilities. A confirmed realist, in this dedication of himself he became something of a mystic. Of him, too, as of his young Irish airman, Yeats might have written:

Nor law, nor duty bade me fight,
Nor public men, nor cheering crowds,
A lonely impulse of delight
Drove to this tumult in the clouds,
I balanced all, brought all to mind,
The years to come seemed waste of breath,
A waste of breath the years behind
In balance with this life, this death.

Except that it was a nicely balanced sense of duty which sent Jack Bergel into the sky and gave his life its perfect fulfilment.

Dec. 12 Osbert Sitwell has a phrase which exactly hits off
Friday. what most people are thinking about Japan. "I am filled with horror at all those clever, patriotic little apes of Japanese hurling themselves about."

Dec. 19 To judge by the nonsense written about my excessive
Friday. use of French you would think it amounted to 10 per cent. or more. Now look at these figures taken from *The Amazing Theatre*. This contains just over 100,000

words. Ten per cent. of 100,000 is 10,000. Actually the book contains 499, say 500 French words, or '05 per cent. My article on Sunday will have the following :

In Balzac's novel, *La Femme de Trente Ans*, occurs this passage :

“ La jeune fille n'a qu'une coquetterie, et croit avoir tout dit quand elle a quitté son vêtement ; mais la femme en a d'innombrables et se cache sous mille voiles ; enfin elle caresse toutes les vanités, et la novice n'en flatte qu'une.

“(Glossary. Coquetterie=coquetry ; Vêtement=vestment ; Innombrables=innumerable ; Voiles=veils ; Vanité=vanity ; Novice=novice.)”

Dec. 20 “ Messieurs,” said Victor Hugo's Lucrèce Borgia to
Saturday. some forty guests, “ vous êtes tous empoisonnés.”

Which I suppose might be roughly translated, “ Misters, you are all poisoned.” Sarah Bernhardt used to half-coo, half-breathe this through incarnadined lips and coralled nostrils, after which she would disappear through a secret panel in the manner of the Cheshire Cat, leaving a dimpled smile behind her. And the folding doors at the back would be thrown open to disclose forty waiting coffins. In *Warn That Man*, at the Garrick to-night, a mere three are poisoned of whom two pretend to be, since they have poured the fatal port into the epergne. Alas, no coffins are provided. We no longer have stomach for horrors, Hugo-esque or Websterian, “ the waxen images which counterfeit death, the wild masque of madmen, the tomb-maker, the bellman, the living person's dirge, the mortification by degrees.” To-day we require bamboozlement of another kind. Elizabethan and Jacobean horror-mongers resorted to scenes of comedy very much in the way a torturer will throw water over his victim to bring him into trim for the next dose. To-day's comedy-thriller puts the accent on the comedy, which, so far as I am concerned, is like multiplying x by e —the result is nothing. Gordon Harker skilfully remembered a lot of dreary bosh, and the audience was delighted. This play is bad enough to run a year.

Dec. 22 Stephen Miall, who knew Charles Dilke very well,
Monday. said that D. had told him these two things :

Bismarck said to Dilke, " If I were to live again I should be a republican ; government by king, it is government by women ; and if they are bad women it is bad, and if they are good women it is worse."

He also said to Dilke, " They have compared me to Cavour. It is true that I have helped to make the German Empire, but I had behind me the German Army which was very good and the German Civil Service which was even better. But Cavour, he has made Italy, and he had behind him nothing."

1942

Jan. 2 · Thinking over the events of the past year I find I
Friday. forgot to record in the Diary the fact that I received from the War Office my two medals for the war of 1914-18! Meeting Ian Hay, now a major-general, in a theatre, I asked him to stir up the appropriate department. The medals arrived three days later, with a letter from the W.O. apologising and saying that they had not been able to race my address.

New Year Resolutions

1. To refrain from saying witty, unkind things, unless they are really witty and irreparably damaging.
2. To tolerate fools more gladly, provided this does not encourage them to take up more of my time.
3. To be more patient with Leo. To bear with that all-pervading aroma of stale Vapex, those scented yet acrid plugs, twists, and flakes, that October-to-March sniffing and snuffling, the sneezing and coughing with which he draws attention to himself whenever I am telephoning, the eternal jeremiads, and the physical clumsiness which, one day last week, caused the following incident. Too blind to see whether the fire was alight or not, he lifted a live coal in his fingers, found it was hot, and let it roll under the piano ten feet away where it burned a hole in my carpet the size of a five-shilling piece. And then the typing! At this very moment Lady Macbeth looks up at me from my desk and intones :

“O, never shall son that moral sea!”

To-day, January 2, 1942, I resolve henceforth to tolerate all this, and to set against it the feast of malice, the flow of wit, and the fine temper of the musician who, when he has driven me half frantic, will go to the piano and play Beethoven

more Beethovenishly than any living virtuoso, sing in a cracked voice the *tuttis* to the concertos, and improvise his own cadenzas. Leo is, I am sure, genuinely fond of me in spite of my too often brutal treatment of him; he has, with Alan Dent, the least common mind of anybody I know. When I am most angry with him I think of Verlaine, whom he resembles in his love of sensuous beauty. And I reflect that the author of *Mes Prisons* would not have been an ideal secretary! To sum up, he is both permanent irritation and perpetual delight; the years he puts on to my life with one hand he takes off with the other. Apropos, Leo's generous befriending of a scruffy young man who had been in trouble gave rise to the best sally I ever heard. I was walking with Ernest Fenton in the Bayswater Road when we saw our old friend approaching with his protégé. "Look," said Ernest, "here come Wormwood and Scrubs!"

Jan. 9 Childishly pleased at something George Harrap told
Friday. me to-day. This was that he had given one of my favourite walking-sticks, my present to him on his recent wedding, to Winston Churchill, and that if I looked at the photograph in the *Daily Telegraph* of the P.M. entering Parliament House, Ottawa, I should see that he is carrying it. I looked, and it is so.

Jan. 11 The Jews are often blamed for that ostentation
Sunday. which is merely the expression of their lavish "hospitality. This is unfair. Some of the hospitality is shrewd, but a great deal of it is pure generosity. Edgar Cohen, the father of Madeleine, who for thirty years kept open house in St John's Wood, when remonstrated with for not knowing half his guests, would say, "I shall worry if I know them! If they come to see me, good. If they come for a meal, also good. Much I shall care what they come for."

Louis Sterling, who every Sunday evening before the last war used to entertain from thirty to fifty uninvited guests, said much the same thing to me to-day. "If they come to see me, they are my friends; if they come for the food, perhaps they need it."

Jan. 12 From a dramatic poem submitted to me in manuscript:
Monday.

HOSTESS: I knew of beauty in the works of Keats and Tennyson,
Music of petals falling, Enoch Arden and Endymion.

DOCTOR: Modern poets are rare,
Picking off vermin in children's hair.

Shall recommend this to one of those precious little magazines which publish this sort of thing.

Jan. 19 To Harwich in perishing weather to talk to mine-layers, minesweepers, and so forth. Dined with the *Monday.* Admiral and then to the ingeniously devised, well lit and warmed theatre, which had been a wine store, or something of the sort. Told a few stories, and then did a Brains Trust the other way round, with me asking the questions and the Navy answering. It was a team affair, Ratings *v.* Wrens *v.* C.P.O.'s and P.O.'s. Three of each. Each member of the winning team to receive twelve books out of the Everyman Library which Dent's had given me to take down. The difficulty was the level of the questions. Recent discovery that out of twelve well-known Savages only a revered chemist of great age knew the last words of Marmion—"Charge, Chester, charge! On, Stanley, on!"—was a warning. The fact that last week I received two letters from soldiers beginning, "Do you no [*sic*] of a good book . . ." was another. If I made the thing too easy there would be no fun; if too difficult, the competition must be a flop. Each member of each group was interrogated in turn—first A.B., first Wren, first P.O., then second A.B., and so on. We had a blackboard, a scorer, and a timekeeper. The A.B.'s won with a maximum score of 12. The P.O.'s were second with a score of 10. They failed to spell "manœuvres" and did not know that it was the Crippen case in which wireless was first used as an aid to detection. The Wrens scored 7, getting one of Vesta Tilley's best-known songs wrong, and failing to spot references to Burns, Queen Elizabeth, Professor Joad, and Catherine Parr. The evening wound up with something which was at once a rebuke and a lesson to the fashioners of Quiz.

There had also been a concert, which included a band famous for its presentation of swing, and I had noticed one of the players who spent the evening slapping a double bass with the palm of his hand—surely the most degrading occupation known to man. In the hotel smoking-room after the concert I said to this vacant fellow, "What is your favourite book?" He replied, "The *Moral Discourses* of Epictetus!"

Jan. 21 Ted Elliott awarded the B.E.M. (See entry for *Wednesday*. July 8, 1941.)

Jan. 27 Disappointed with Edward G. Robinson in *The Sea Tuesday*. *Wolf*, a psychological film about a rascally captain with a split mind, whereas I had been looking forward to two hundred lashes in Technicolor.

Feb. 3 How many people know the words inscribed on the *Tuesday*. statue of Johnson turning his back on the ruins of St Clement Danes? They are:

Samuel Johnson
LL.D.

Critic—Essayist—Philologist
Biographer—Wit—Poet—Moralist
Dramatist—Political Writer—Talker

Born 1709 Died 1784

Time has turned Johnson's stream of mind into an everlasting river. But it was the talking that did it. I was so much struck this morning by the aspect of the statue against the bare ruin'd choirs and the snow that I 'phoned the *Express* to come and take a photograph, which they did.

Feb. 4 Worth while being laid up to have the chance of *Wednesday*. really reading Haydon's *Autobiography*, hitherto only glanced at. I can't make up my mind how far H. was an artist at heart. There is Hazlitt's:

I did not think he had failed so much from want of capacity, as from attempting to bully the public into a premature or

overstrained admiration of him, instead of gaining ground upon them by improving on himself; and he now felt the ill effects of the reaction of this injudicious proceeding. He had no real love of his art, and therefore did not apply or give his whole mind sedulously to it; and was more bent on bespeaking notoriety beforehand by puffs and announcements of his works, than on giving them that degree of perfection which would ensure lasting reputation.

As against this we must set Haydon's prayers, the sum of which is less "Let me be a great painter," than "Let Art be great in my time, and let me be her chief minister."

Has the irony of Haydon's end been sufficiently noticed? I do not mean that he found it necessary both to cut his throat *and* blow out his brains. Consider that the final act was brought about by the failure of his two vast canvases—the *Banishment of Aristides* and *Nero playing his Lyre while Rome is burning*. To exhibit these he had hired a room in the Egyptian Hall. But alas, another room had been taken in the same hall by, of all people, General Tom Thumb! The public flocked to see the modern oddity and left the heroes of antiquity severely alone, and in this manner was giantism vanquished by a dwarf. I like to think that Haydon threw up the sponge in a moment of pique, that he was spared the anguish of realising that he was not, had never been, and could never be, a great painter. Of the second string to his bow—his genius as a diarist—he was unconscious. It is by his *Autobiography* that he lives. Woe to other Diarists who have no masterpiece in another art to fall back upon!

Feb. 8 Ivor Brown suggests that John Gielgud's choice of *Sunday*. Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies for his Lady Macbeth shows his desire "to get away from conventional casting and to seek a subtler form of spur and temptress than a more statuesque figure and larger vehemence would supply." Tut-tut! To me the choice of Ffrangcon-Davies, coupled with Leon Quartermaine for Banquo, suggests John's very natural

desire to keep to the company which supported him in *The Importance of Being Earnest*. How amusing if he had stuck to it throughout! What fun to sit in wonder before Edith's Lady Macbeth, and hear her "Oh, never shall sun that morrow see" uttered in Lady Bracknell's darkest "Alliance-with-a-parcel" tones! "Me, sir! What has it to do with me?" knowing very well that Macbeth's going hence has everything to do with her. I long to see Dr Chasuble telling Macbeth in George Howe's silkiest falsetto that his chatter about infected minds and deaf pillows is a metaphor drawn from the sick-room. And what a collector's piece would be Margaret Rutherford as the Gentlewoman, though I may be thinking less here of the governess than of the housekeeper, less of the Manor house than of Manderley. T. S. Eliot once re-wrote a Greek tragedy in the Wishwood manner. Why doesn't some highbrow re-write *Macbeth* in the *Rebecca* manner, with the mistress of Dunsinane watched over by Duncan's natural daughter? In the mind's eye I conjure up a fearful vision of lace curtains, gloatings, and eggings on. "Another step, dear—it's quite a nice roof—no, dear, it isn't slippery—just a little nearer the edge, duckie." Except, of course, that there would be precious little sleep-walking with la Rutherford as the night nurse in charge.

But to go back to *Macbeth*. Like Hamlet, who says he will speak daggers but use none, Lady Macbeth speaks them pointedly, and must impress the audience with the fact that she has the necessary mettle. Has anybody, reading *Macbeth*, ever conjured up a small slight figure? No. But if any living English actress can persuade us to accept a Lady Macbeth out of the heavy-weight class, then Gwen is that actress. I remember how in *Magda* she faced up to Pastor Heffterdingt, and heard him say, "When you stood before me in your primitive strength" without turning a hair. An Egyptian native in the course of an essay on Shakespeare's heroines wrote: "Lady Macbeth was brave and venturesome, but she had no tact." Gwen is brave and venturesome, and has any amount of histrionic tact.

April 2 Some days ago I received a letter from a soldier
Thursday. saying he enlisted to fight and not to be mucked
 about, that he was completely "browned-off," and
 what were my views on desertion? I bunged Milton's *Sonnet on*
his Blindness at him together with a Screed in my Noblest Vein.
 Received letter to-day saying "Thanks, old cock, but isn't the
 Milton *vieux jeu*? In any case I prefer this bit from Ignatius
 Loyola." Bit enclosed.

Easter Monday. A sad little sum :

James Agate, Esq.
In account with Hutchinson & Co. Ltd.

SPEAK FOR ENGLAND

Statement for 12 months ending Dec. 31, 1941.

1941			
<i>Jan. 1.</i>	To Stock on Hand	..	1603
<i>Dec. 31.</i>	By Stock on Hand	534	
	Destroyed by enemy action	1069	1603
		<hr/>	
		Sales	o
		<hr/>	

April 10 Herbert Farjeon shares my passion for lists. The six
Friday. most exciting vintage clarets, the six dullest British
 composers—you know the sort of thing. A recent
 essay of his on one's best week in the theatre, chosen eclectically,
 has set me jotting down what I should choose if I could bring
 back six nights at the play.

Can I doubt my first choice? Two lines from Dowson's
Impenitentia Ultima give it away.

And her eyes should be my light whilst the sun went out
 behind me,
 And the viols in her voice be the last sound in mine ear.

But in what? Not, I think, in any of the classic rôles. I want
 to see her draw from her bosom the letter from le père Duval,

place the pillow on her knee and the letter on the pillow, smooth it and put her hands over it. I want to hear her read by heart, "Armand est loin, mais il reviendra vous demander non seulement son pardon, mais le mien, car j'ai été forcé de vous faire du mal et je veux le réparer. Soignez-vous bien, espérez; votre courage et votre. . . ." I want to hear her gather pace in the reading, as she always did, and then break down at the word "abnégation," a little above Marguerite's education.

After Sarah, Irving. No, not as Hamlet, "the hair looking blue-black, like the plumage of a crow; the eyes burning—two fires veiled by melancholy." (Ellen Terry, of course.) Nor yet "looking like some beautiful grey tree that I have seen in Havana." (Ellen.) Nor yet as that "great famished wolf," Macbeth. (Ellen again.) Not, indeed, in any of the classical parts, nor even in *The Lyons Mail*, rifling the pockets of the murdered postboy and murmuring, "You're a beauty, you are!" I should want to see H. I. simply and straightforwardly dusting the snow from his boots, and with his rare, exquisite smile refusing the help of the little maid offering to help with his garters. "Sargent tried to paint Henry's smile and gave it up," wrote Ellen. For my third evening I should want to be sitting once more in the front row of the pit in the Manchester Theatre Royal—one had to sit sideways because the stalls partition hurt one's knees—on that Saturday in December 1899, and watching Benson's Richard beguile his "sweet way to despair" by chopping poet's logic. Next I see a room, comfortably and tastefully, but not expensively, furnished. It is growing dusk, and the maidservant has not yet brought the lamp. A lady, dressed in the costume of the 'eighties, with her head bent over her work-basket, is listening to an obviously dying man. He leans forward, makes his declaration of lifelong attachment, and the lady, rising, says, "Let me pass, please," with the drop of a sixth between the second and third words. Janet Achurch is the Nora.

And now it begins to be difficult. Shall I, for my fifth evening, go back to April 1907, recapture that first night with the Irish National Theatre, and hold my breath as Arthur Sinclair in *The Shadow of the Glen* gives the world a new idiom? "It's lonesome

roads she'll be going and hiding herself away till the end will come, and they find her stretched like a dead sheep with the frost on her, or the big spiders maybe, and they putting their webs on her, in the butt of a ditch." Or shall it be the first night of Galsworthy's *The Silver Box*, or Masfield's *Nan*? Shall it be Mrs Kendal in a miraculously disciplined dolman of maroon velvet seeking forgiveness from the top waistcoat button of a lord and master whose nose is in difficulties with his lady's puce bonnet? Shall it be Hawtrey doing nothing, yet with greater art than is possessed by a dozen of your modern actors who can't keep still? Shall it be Guitry as Pasteur, or Sacha and Yvonne in *Mozart*? The Lunts perhaps? Some bitter comedy by Maugham, or witty farce by Noel? Or Shaw's *St Joan*? No. It shall be none of these. My fifth choice goes to Mrs Pat. But in what? In Echegaray's *Mariana*? As Hedda Gabler offended by Tesman's remark about his aunt-embroidered slippers, "You can't think how many associations cling to them," and returning a chilly "Scarcely for me"? Or in Sudermann's *Es lebe das Leben*—I can still hear the ring of the poison bottle as it falls on to the dessert plate? No. I think it must be as Paula Tanqueray. Pinero's ocean of sentiment may have been false. But the seas were big, and this actress rode them.

Sixth place is impossible. Alas, that I have no room for Turgenev's *A Month in the Country*, or for Clare Eames in Jean-Jacques Bernard's *The Unquiet Spirit*. My last choice must be something by Tchekhov, the playwright who, next to Shakespeare, has given me the most delight. But which play? A Russian version I once saw of *The Cherry Orchard*, with Germanova as Madame Ranevsky, that part which has overthrown every English actress I have seen attempt it? (It has overthrown them because they have insisted on remaining English and indefatigable, and thus missing the Slav charm and indolence.) Komisarjevsky's production of *The Three Sisters*? *Uncle Vanya* with Jean Forbes-Robertson? No. For my last evening I choose Easter Sunday immediately before the war, at the little Théâtre des Mathurins, *The Seagull* with the Pitoëffs and again Germanova.

April 24 Shocking little revue at the Vaudeville last night.
Friday.

Let reading, writing, 'istry,
J'ography die,
But leave us Ho-di-ho and
Hi-di-hi

chanted a thirteen-year-old, and the gallery stamped and yelled approval. O for a modern Bacon and a new essay on Radio and the Retardment of Learning! Then they swung Thomas Nashe's *Spring*—I remember Marie Garcia singing Henschel's lovely setting in my mother's drawing-room. The swing music was feeble to the point of expiry. *Vienna will Dance Again*. It will, but to its own quick, gay pulse, and not the leaden-footed drone of a suburban *palais de danse* crowd, swaying in sympathy with the mackintoshes steaming on the wall.

April 26 Another Brains Trust. At Didcot. Eckersley, Bill *Sunday*. Barrett, Colonel White, Gerald Barry, Walter Legge (question master), Andrade, and Kingsley Martin, a genial, witty, Rabelaisian, non-specious, non-canting fellow wholly unlike the *New Statesman* which he edits. Gerald told us a story of an Irish professor who, having racketed about all his life, was persuaded on his eightieth birthday to let a doctor look him over. The doctor diagnosed gout, rheumatism, gravel, stone, enlarged pancreas, and deteriorated spleen, ending with a demand for five guineas. "D'ye think, now," said the enraged professor, "that it's foive guineas I'll be paying to listen to a stream of obscenities the like o' that?" It was at Didcot this afternoon that I first heard the name given by the Army to the psychiatrists now being taken on by the R.A.M.C. The boys call them "trick-cyclists." Which, of course, is what they are.

Stayed at the Randolph at Oxford. It is always good to return to places in which one has been thoroughly miserable. I hated Oxford—the rudest, meanest, sub-normallest hole I have ever struck. I went there with an admiration and expectancy like young Jude's; the only pleasant recollection I have of it is

the care taken of me by young Charlie, and the lively companionship with which he beguiled the unutterable and filthy tedium.

April 27. Monday. Marie Tempest about again after her illness, and holding court at the Ivy. When the time comes my old friend will *act* the twenty-third chapter of *Villette*. I remember a commemoration luncheon some ten or twelve years ago after the public had refused to flock to see her in *Mr Pim Passes By*. It was a brilliant performance, but alas, the public passed it by! The point is simply that the familiar is the enemy both of the worse and the better. An actor or actress who makes a real success in a part, and provided that part be not of the grand order, makes that part his or hers for life. No player can monopolise Hamlet: but whoever first plays, say, Aubrey Tanqueray, bags him for good. George Alexander may or may not have been a good actor, but while he lived his was the first and last Mr Tanqueray. The partakers of the funeral baked meats that day were three: Marie Tempest, Graham Browne, and myself. She wept, he wept, and I wept, until the *Caneton à la Mauvaise Presse* was a wet and soggy business. At last one of us spoke, and he said, "My dear Mary, if you were three times better than Irene Vanbrugh you wouldn't be half so good!" Whereupon Mary mopped an eye which had never been really wet, smiled bravely with the other, and said that, after all, everybody *at the beginning of their careers* must expect reverses. She was sixty-five then. The luncheon ended in extreme gaiety.

April 29. Wednesday. *Here's Richness!* published.

May 9. Saturday. When the bombing started I sent a duplicate of the Diary to my brother Harry at York. And this has been the procedure with every entry from that date onwards. Naturally a lot of dead wood has had to be cut away. And without a word of complaint from Harry until

this morning, when I receive what must be the mildest protest ever.

When you get really hard up I am sure that de la Rue's will be only too pleased to offer you a job as "games inventor." Here's a recipe for one to be called "Diary."

Think of an entry
Emend it
Add five subsidiary pages
Take away three
Substitute two others
Insert an Intaglio

Take away the entry you first thought of and DELETE THE WHOLE. This is a grand game!

May 10 Sunday. Brains Trust at Felixstowe. Followed by the worst wind-cum-nerves attack I have had for years, beginning in the train at eight o'clock and lasting till three in the morning. The old stuff all over again, only more of it. I lie in bed and imagine that my arms and legs have become detached, and that I cannot put the complete body together again. Next I am the central figure in Grunewald's altar-piece, *Temptation of St Anthony*. From this—"of sorriest fancies my companions making"—I proceed to De Quincey's essay on *The Last Days of Kant*, except that that old gentleman's "shocking and indescribable phantasmata" came to him in sleep while mine happen while I am wide awake. Soon after three o'clock a friendly bout of asthma came along, friendly because normal and therefore to be coped with. While coping with it I fell asleep.

May 11 Monday. Better this morning and able to realise that Poe, Grunewald, and De Quincey spell gooseberry pie.

May 17 Sunday. Compèred a concert at Henley this afternoon and had a bit of a collapse afterwards.

May 25 Monday. The doctor, frowning on the idea of Macbeth's Witches dancing round my bed which has suddenly become cauldron, and of me holding parley with hags and monsters who are not there, diagnoses overwork and threatens a nursing home. Compromise by proposing to turn the Villa Volpone into a reasonable imitation of one. Here is my régime: Regular meals, gentle exercise—like Millamant I nauseate walking—early bed, no cigars, and not more whiskey than would sustain a fly. Also to lay off all work.

May 30 Saturday. The régime isn't working, because I am! It's all very well for Brother Harry to write, "Go window-shopping. Inspect Woolworth's minutely. Visit the Zoo. Study fish. Buy a book on insect life." *I just can't do nothing*, and during the last week have put in eight to ten hours a day proof-correcting. Try going to Lord's, the dentist, Lord's again, but always come back to my desk. As this isn't fair to my papers which have given me a holiday and think I am twiddling my thumbs, I have decided to go to Bournemouth for a week with George Mathew, whose holiday falls opportunely. Leo is to examine correspondence and forward all of it that isn't worrying.

May 31 Sunday. Opening my paper in the train to Bournemouth, I read that John Barrymore has died. Oddly enough, among the books I have brought down with me is a review copy of Mrs Alma Power-Waters's biography published this week. "For God's sake don't whitewash me," Barrymore said to her. "Play me as I am." This would seem to be a favourite gambit with players. Rachel wrote in one of her last letters: "Si les faiseurs de chroniques scandaleuses s'avisent un jour de reproduire ma vie, contez-la dans toute sa simplicité." Well, it's an old argument. I turn up the travelling companion who never leaves me, and I read: JOHNSON: "Sir, the question is, whether a man's vices should be mentioned; for instance, whether it should be mentioned that Addison and Parnell drank too freely: for people will probably

more easily indulge in drinking from knowing this ; so that more ill may be done by the example, than good by telling the whole truth." Boswell collated this with another observation made on the same subject when Lord Hailes and Johnson "sat one morning calmly conversing in my house at Edinburgh." On this occasion Johnson said, "If a man is to write *A Panegyrick*, he may keep vices out of sight ; but if he professes to write *A Life* he must represent it really as it was." And when Boswell objected to the danger of telling that Parnell drank to excess, Johnson said, "It would produce an instructive caution to avoid drinking, when it was seen, that even the learning and genius of Parnell could be debased by it."

I hold that whoever said, "There's nothing so tragic as a man of genius who is not also a man of honour," went off the rails badly. Like complaining that a fiddler should be colour-blind. The tragic thing is when a man of genius throws his genius away. Brooks Atkinson, the New York critic, in a Foreword to Mrs Power-Waters's book, finds excuses for Barrymore. He is describing the reappearance of the actor at the Belasco Theatre the year before last : "Barrymore made his entrance in a raffish fur coat—ravaged and jaunty, weary and sardonic, ill and sprightly. I was shocked by what seventeen years of revelry had done to the greatest romantic actor we have ever had. And in spite of his *savoir-faire* I imagined that he was a little terrified by the coarse voracity of the audience. But blood and genius will tell, if they are genuine ; and as the evening wore on there was no doubt that we had an actor before us. Despite the morbid expectations of the audience, it was soon clear that Mr Barrymore was no broken-down hack, asking forgiveness for a prodigal existence. He was not penniless or remorseful. He was a wit in his own right and he could laugh at himself or the play without condescending. From the point of view of art it is a pity that his gifts have been so lightly squandered. But from the point of view of a human being, I think it is exhilarating to see a man with an ironic and candid mind taking things as they come and sharpening the realities with a wisecrack." I only half agree. In my view a man of genius should hold his genius

as precious as his life. I can never forgive Kean for dying at the age of forty-six. Barrymore could have been as great an actor as Talma, and was not.

June 3 John Gielgud, who is giving the natives a taste of
Wednesday. his *Macbeth*, turned up. Also Charles Smith, who is running the *George and Margaret* Company here. We collected George Mathew and had a little party in my room—if I can't drink whiskey I can make pretence with a syphon. John delighted me by letting out what really happens when distinguished players produce plays over the heads of Ivor Brown's factory hands and miners. How, at some camp wheré he was playing *Dear Brutus*, the Canadians marched out in a body, one of them being heard to say, "Jesus, they're crackers!" He showed me an interesting collection of things written about the *Macbeths* of Garrick, Kean, Kemble, Macready, Booth, Rossi, Irving. I was looking through this when the sirens went. They were raiding Poole across the water, and after watching it for half an hour from the balcony we resumed our talk and didn't break up till the All Clear about 4 A.M.

June 4 Mark Hambourg came down to play. The old boy
Thursday. was in grand fettle, and at lunch told us a strictly non-Maeterlinckian story about a zoological friend of his who has succeeded in breeding an entirely blue bird, and now can't sleep for thinking of the amount of feathered incest that has been necessary. Afterwards to the Pavilion, where Mark gave a grand and Beethovenish performance of the C minor piano concerto. Mark tells me that Beethoven wrote on the MS. "Not for women." He certainly gives the last movement its proper Flemish character, a whole countryside away from the weak Mozartian charm with which women pianists invest it.

June 6 John was anxious, even insistent, that I should not
Saturday. write in the *S.T.* about last night's performance, on the ground that he is tired, the cast has had casualties, and the production is about to go into dry-dock prior

to London. I promised, telling him that *I* was tired, but with a mental reservation about *Ego*. And so behaved exactly like the Witches "That keep the word of promise to our ear, And break it to our hope!" John will never be happy vocally with Macbeth; his voice is neither deep enough nor resonant enough. But what sheer acting ability can do, he does. His is the only Macbeth I have ever seen who has kept it up all the way through; the last act, where most of them fall down, is superb. In the lounge before lunch Ffrangcon-Davies argued by metaphysical X, Y, and Z that Lady Macbeth is a frail little thing, all nervous energy and no physique. Lady M. can't contemplate a murder without taking something to steady her nerves. ("That which hath made them drunk hath made me bold.") She can't carry one through and has to invent an excuse. ("Had he not resembled my father as he slept, I had done 't.") She is given to fainting and sleep-walking, and cracks up in the end. All very persuasive, and I don't believe a word of it. I don't and won't see Lady M. as a kind of Rosa Dartle. If I can't have Mrs Siddons give me Mrs Vincent Crummles. The vast Pavilion was crowded. Many were service men, some of whom had to leave before the end. It was still bright day, and each time a soldier crept out the golden sunlight peeped through the blanket of the dark.

July 1 Billy Bennett, the music-hall comedian, died *Wednesday*. yesterday. At the Brains Trust at Horsham* the question was asked: "Are dirty jokes permissible, and where should the line be drawn?" I said that jokes which have to do with the natural functions of the mind and body are permissible, whereas jokes which palliate and condone the infiltration of the normal and healthy by the abnormal and unhealthy are impermissible. This answer understood, shall I say intermittently, by the South Loamshires would seem to let in Rabelais, Montaigne, Swift, Sterne, Smollett, and the Restoration dramatists, while letting out writers of thrillers obnoxious to the police. It would equally keep in the great succession of British music-hall comedians from Arthur Roberts to George Robey, while excluding the modern exploiters of the innuendo

and the leer. Billy Bennett was forthright, bawdy, and wholesome. He knew that what sailors and soldiers on leave look for is not a rock bun, a symphony concert, or a lecture on modern poetry. He knew that a Saturday night audience is a crowd of clerks and shop assistants, let out after being pent up for the week in warehouse or store. He was a wiser man than Burke, who ought to have known that vice which loses its grossness doubles its evil. Bennett's grossness had that gusto about it which is like a high wind blowing over a noisome place. He never meant more or worse than he raucously proclaimed. Sometimes you said to yourself in half-delighted, half-fearful apprehension: "Surely he isn't going to suggest . . ." Which was foolish of you, because Bennett never suggested anything. He said what he had to say, and emptied his mind of the matter very much as our eighteenth-century caricaturists would show viragoes at upper windows emptying their wrath and other things on the heads of those below. Bennett will live in the annals of the music-hall. Nobody who ever saw him is likely to forget that rubicund, unæsthetic countenance, that black, plastered quiff, that sergeant-major's moustache, that dreadful dinner-jacket, that well-used dickey and seedy collar, the too-short trousers, the hob-nailed boots, the red silk handkerchief tucked into the waistcoat, the continual perspiration which was the outward and visible sign of a mind struggling for expression—these things will not be forgotten. His best witicism was that in which he deplored his permanent non-success at Huddersfield—"They take me for a baritone." He raised every night in the week to the level of Saturday night, gave his audience infinite amusement, and never uttered a word at which sensible people could take offence. Off the stage he had a manner quiet almost to shyness, in keeping with his gentle and wholly nice mind.

July 3 To the Proms with Gwen Chenhalls. Superb per-
Friday. formance of the *Symphonie Fantastique*, grandly con-
ducted by Basil Cameron. But why didn't Berlioz
end the symphony with the "Marche au Supplice"? Sheer
composer's vanity, of course, and some nonsense about finishing

the story. Also because, like Wagner, he had no sense of the point at which, in the hearer, saturation is reached. The "Marche" is one of the most final things in music, in the sense of bringing a work to an end; there is no more going beyond it than you can go beyond the buffers at Euston Station. The "Ronde du Sabbat," immensely fine though it is, must always be an anticlimax, since not even genius can end a work twice. But no. Berlioz was the victim of his own *idée fixe*, and because he could twist and turn his theme still further, we must stay to listen. In my view he should have added a bit to this pretended last movement and turned it into a symphonic poem on the same theme.

July 19 Brighton.

Sunday. In the cant phrase which will have no meaning after the war: Is my journey really necessary? My health thinks so, and I don't believe that my twelve stone is going to make all that difference to a train which is going anyhow. Great headlines in this morning's papers inform me that "This Will Be The Crisis Week Of The War" and "History Will Be Made In Russia And Egypt." Possibly. I can do nothing about it. Besides, there are battles to be fought at home. For example, with Ivor Brown maintaining that the supremacy of the old actor was due to the excessive sensibility of the old audience. I shall continue to dispute this in the true Bunyanesque manner till the pen grows out of my hand and the blood runs through my fingers. In the meantime the Russian affair gives cause for uneasiness. The Germans are obviously taking Hester Thrale's view that "If gunpowder enough is put under Mont Blanc, it *must* give way." Let us hope they haven't enough powder.

The first thing I did on arrival yesterday was to buy a new bowler hat. The next to take a *promenade en auto*—in tripper's English, go for a ride round. Passing the pitch-and-putt golf-course at Rottingdean I was seized with an uncontrollable desire to play golf, not having touched a club since August 1939. I got out of the taxi, bade it wait, and challenged a total stranger.

The young man said he didn't play, preferring T. S. Eliot. But I insisted and gave him three strokes a hole. The course was empty except for a quartet of sailors presently engaging in a scrambling four-ball after the manner of a landing party. We let them through, and they did the eighteen holes in the same number of minutes. Whether it was the new bowler or the fact that my glasses are not suitable to golf, I don't know; the fact remains that I couldn't find any green, and at the twelfth hole, where my opponent was dormy seven, hooked the ball to square leg, losing it and the match. Whereupon I said good-bye to the young man who resumed poring over Eliot, having regarded me throughout as an insane but harmless old gentleman.

Charles Smith came to dinner, which the Old Ship still does very well. A good soup, choice of salmon or chicken, a sweet, and cheese. I had a half-pint of the old Bollinger N.V. at fifteen shillings, only half a crown above pre-war price. To the Hippodrome afterwards, where Arthur Prince had a new dummy, a midshipman stiff and straight as a ramrod and with a marked resemblance to Ella Shields. Also Will Fyffe in a poor scene about Clydebank, but winding up with "Daft Sandy," a bare-faced assault on the emotions acted in that grand manner which so annoys the quietists. Finally the Dagenham girl-pipers, the applause of listening senates to command.

Spent this, Sunday, morning writing and gazing out of the window at the barbed wire and the empty front. Occasionally one of Whitman's "tan-faced prairie-boys"—actually a yokel with the gormless Sussex expression—would come past in a bright blue suit and holding some tight-skirted, plump-legged little besom by the hand. The hotels on the right are given over to the soldiery; those to the left are boarded up and empty. And I think of the poet's:

The summer's flower is to the summer sweet,
Though to itself it only live and die.

Brighton is living and dying to itself. My waiter at dinner last night said, "You won't see me to-morrow, sir; I'm going for my summer holidays." I asked where he was going. "Brighton," he replied.

July 20 Monday. Dined at Dilys Powell's. Excellent cold soup, a noble salmon-trout, cherries, and an Alsatian white wine. Leonard Russell, Cyril Lakin and his wife, George Mathew. They were all interested, or seemed to be, in the new *Ego*; some of them expressed views as to how the Diary could become immortal. Lakin's notion was that I should widen the scope, which I took to mean contact with more notabilities. Russell thought I should retire to the Cotswolds and pontificate *à la Coleridge*. Both agreed that I ought to limit publication to once every five years. (How many lustrums do they think I can look forward to?) Dilys wanted me to record the size of the sugar ration, the scarcity of taxi-cabs, and the date when the Café Royal started turning customers away at half-past nine. Like a wise Tar-baby, George Mathew wasn't sayin' nuthin'. The point, of course, is that all of them, except George, want me to write *their* Diary. I shall do no such thing. I shall continue to abound in my own sense. I shall continue to write *my* Diary, let events and people come to me, and discourse about such of them as interest me, always remembering that I take more kindly to an old clown than to a new poet. Just as I have never embellished, so I shall not pad. The present-day truncated dramatic criticism will never be reprinted. Which is an excellent reason why some record of a notable production or fine piece of acting should be preserved. With this object in view, if it pleases me to quote part, or even the whole, of a *Sunday Times* article, I shall do so. I shall issue a volume every two years for as long as I am spared, or until George tells me I am written out. He is my literary executor, with powers to start work at any time.

July 30 Thursday. Meric Dobson, now a sub-lieutenant in the R.N.V.R., told me this. During his recent leave he visited a travelling circus near Bristol. Introducing "Miss Zelfredo, the world-famous snake-charmer," the ringmaster said: "It is with great regret that I have to announce one of the great tragedies of the Ring. Doreen Zelfredo's python, which had been with her for six years, died on Friday

at Knowle. I am sure the audience will join with me in sympathy for Doreen, and in the wish that she may soon find a new pal. If ever woman loved a snake Doreen did. Miss Zelfredo will now enter the ring and perform her act without her snake."

Aug. 3 That I refuse to diarise about the war does not mean *Monday.* that it is never in my mind. I often find myself

backsliding into thought about it. Over this morning's breakfast I considered the question of the Second Front, and as the match at Lord's doesn't start for another hour will here and now set down the sum of my idle, useless, and, as events will assuredly prove, wrong-headed speculations on the subject. Since my intelligence is presumably not lower than that of the man in the street, what follows may be taken as representing the view of the war situation generally held on the Bank Holiday of 1942. Except that in what follows I shall attempt a plan, whereas the average man is content with a blur.

Let me turn to the statement issued simultaneously in Washington and London after the meeting of Roosevelt and Churchill: "Full understanding was reached by the two parties with regard to the urgent tasks of creating a second front in Europe in 1942." I immediately think of Gladstone, and how he could have slipped out of this as easily as out of one of his collars. The G.O.M. would have signed the statement without a qualm though knowing that his own mind was made up against a second front. But there is more honesty in Roosevelt's little finger or Churchill's big toe than in the whole of the G.O.M.'s body—doubtless that old fox took astuteness for sincerity—and I am prepared to believe that the joint statement meant nine-tenths of what it looked like meaning—*viz.*, that the two parties would face up to the urgent tasks with the implied reservation that facing up included the question of feasibility.

Let me go on to the situation to-day. If the job turns out not to be feasible, why, then, there's an end to it. But let me suppose that it *is* feasible. Here the average man says, "Why don't we set about it? Why waste time?" The point is that a thing may be both feasible and inadvisable, taking feasible to

mean "capable of being set on foot," and not "capable of being carried to a successful conclusion." There are, then, four possibilities attending on the feasible thing :

- A. The second front maintains itself in being, and reduces the pressure on Russia. Russia holds.
- B. The second front maintains itself in being. In spite of this Russia fails to hold.
- C. The second front ends in another Dunkirk or worse. Russia holds.
- D. Another Dunkirk or worse. Russia fails to hold.

Now consider the result in each case :

- A. This means winning the war.
- B. We are no worse off than before.
- C. We are distinctly worse off than before.
- D. We lose the war or are prevented from winning it. Unless this can be done from the air—a question about which I can form no opinion.

Looking at the matter realistically, and putting aside the question of what Russia may have understood by the Washington-London agreement, I conclude that

A SECOND FRONT CONTAINS THE SEEDS OF BOTH TOTAL VICTORY AND TOTAL DEFEAT.

Whereas

THE ABSENCE OF A SECOND FRONT POSTPONES THE FIRST BUT DOES NOT INVITE THE SECOND.

I don't say that the foregoing conclusions are right. I am even doubtful about the premises. It is the best I can do in the way of clear thinking about such data as I possess. And what data ! I do not know to within 100,000 tons what daily supplies would be necessary to keep an army of 1,000,000 in the field. Even if I knew this I could not calculate how much shipping would be required according as the invasion takes place at Boulogne, Biarritz, or Narvik. Even if I could, I still should not know

whether we have the ships and can safeguard them. Or how many aeroplanes would be necessary, and whether we have these. The upshot of all my brilliant thinking, therefore, is that I *ought not to have, have not, and will not allow myself to have*, any view as to whether there should be a second front now or not. The whole question is entirely above my competence. In the meantime a friend of mine, who has as logical a brain as any man I know, gives next week as the probable time, and over a month ago I heard "from the best possible source" that the actual date is the day after to-morrow. That's how the chatter goes. And I return to my old position: What possible interest will attach in a hundred years, or even by the time this book is published, to amateur guess-work about a matter whose event will then be known?

Aug. 3 I sometimes think I could have written good books if
 Monday. I had had the time. *L. of C.* was jotted down when I ought to have been concentrating on the Pay and Mess Book of an A.S.C. Divisional Train, *Buzz, Buzz!* when I ought to have been cooking forage accounts, and *Responsibility* when I should have been auditing those of brother officers. This sixth and possibly final volume of *Ego*—I can feel an October nip in the air—will be my thirty-seventh book, unless, of course, I publish some more while it is writing. This means thirty-seven slabs of stolen time. Every moment spent on *Ego* has been filched from the hours I should have been giving to this editor and that. George Meredith relinquished his job as publisher's reader because he could live by his novels. But since, all deductions made, my books have never brought me in even a hundred pounds a year, I must continue reviewing plays, films, novels. And then there is the old income-tax nuisance. My arrears tie me to the stake. Bear-like, I must fight the course.

And I am getting on. I grow old. I no longer care about appearances. In the days when I was horse-showing I was as well groomed as my little marvel *Ego*. Now I wear the same suit ten days running, and underlinen till its state is positively Johnsonian. I make a shave last three days, and can't be bothered

with haircuts. When I go upstairs to make myself presentable and sally forth as in the long ago—all this takes a good hour, and in that hour I could have reviewed a play, a film, or a book. I feel that there is a certain unnaturalness about an old fogey smelling April and May. Is there not something grotesque and even revolting in the spectacle of the septuagenarian Goethe writing a *Trilogy of Passion* to the bouncing Ulrike von Levetzow?

Aug 6 During the last three days I have been laid low, or
Thursday. rather kept bolt upright, by a very painful attack of neuritis in the neck and shoulders, which has made me move in one piece. Michael Shepley says that I sit down and get up at the Café Royal like Banquo's Ghost at the banquet!

Aug 7 The B.B.C. rings up to know whether I will travel to
Friday Bangor, stay the night there, and broadcast a talk with a Welsh factory girl. For wasting two days, and to make up for the bore of travelling, I am offered expenses and a fee of ten guineas, of which seven go to income tax. Really, there is a transcendentalism of delirium—as Gilbert's Lady Jane would say—about these B.B.C. proposals which the earthy might easily mistake for imbecility.

Aug 8 Oh, that mine adversary had written a book! To
Saturday. my unutterable joy I find that my old enemy, G. W. Stonier, of the *New Statesman* (see *Ego* 5, p. 165), committed this indiscretion many years ago, and that I reviewed it. The book is called *The Shadow across the Page*. I cull:

“God must be angry,” said the child, “or the thunder wouldn't be so loud”; and she raised her hands in prayer like a lightning conductor.

Praying to be struck, I suppose! If I had raised my hands in prayer like Stonier's Awful Child, G. W. S. could not have delivered himself into them better.

Aug. 9 Am writing this at some lodgings in Wellington Square, Oxford, after a week-end of riotous idleness.

Came down with Edgar Lustgarten on Friday, too late for dinner at any of the hotels. But Joyce Lustgarten, who has more brains than her chic entitles her to, does wonderfully with stuff out of tins; the landlady, like most of her kind in this vile-mannered town, disallows any facilities for cooking, except for breakfast. Initiate Joyce and a highly dynamic young woman called Josephine Driver—a crooner in the Potato and Carrot Division of the Ministry of Food—into cut-throat bridge, at which Joyce wins. When the girls have gone to bed Edgar produces whiskey and invites me to listen to his reconstruction of the Marx Brothers films, *A Night at the Opera* and *Animal Crackers*. His gift for miming, his delighted apprehension of Groucho, whom he physically resembles in all but the moustache, his intense absorption in his own performance—these keep me up, a willing if slightly bemused listener, till round about three. By my bedside I find a bunch of pink roses, reading-lamp, matches, the *Love Poems* of John Donne, Proust's *Within a Budding Grove*, and Damon Runyon's *More than Somewhat*. Read, re-read, and read again the magnificent poem entitled "The Flea," and go to sleep wishing to-day's young poets could resolve their logic-chopping into a full-close as magnificent as Donne's

• Though parents grudge, and you, we're met,
 And cloistered in these living walls of jet.

Lunch yesterday was in a maisonette over a dairy in a back street. Two bedrooms turned into a restaurant by an elderly Austrian refugee—a well-known Viennese specialist—and his wife. A charming couple who will not let you think them pathetic. Beautiful cooking—soup, ragoût of beef, and a sweet. Half a crown a head. The cinema in the evening, dinner at the Mitre, more cut-throat. Edgar, again producing whiskey, gives me a lecture on the brilliance of Patrick Hastings—"the greatest advocate this century has produced"—and brushes aside my objection that distinguished lawyers and prominent statesmen should not let down their reputation by writing undistinguished

plays. "Why, James, do you show horses?" The suggestion that my little Ego could even by implication be considered anything but a top-notch sends me to bed. Not in a huff, but betimes. By the reading-lamp Pepys, *Ulysses*, and Bromfield's *The Strange Case of Miss Annie Spragg*.

Came down to breakfast this morning feeling well and fit. New-laid, lightly boiled egg—a thing I haven't tasted for a year. Ivor Brown in the *Observer* has this remarkable passage:

The British Government, for the first time, is concerned with (and financing) the arts, not one but all of them, and not for purposes of propaganda only. This is a most remarkable break with the old tradition of Governmental isolation. It is up to the artist to realise the challenge which this implies. By their success now in providing recreation will their status in the future be determined.

Not by me. While accepting Ivor's definition of recreation as "renewal of mind and body and not just an hour's escape into dreamland," I shall still not give a Hamlet first-class status because he has succeeded in impressing yokels seeing Shakespeare for the first time. I am telling Joyce I can just force myself to believe in bringing Art to the masses because of the occasional receptive soul who might otherwise never establish contact with it, when Edgar looks up from Runyon's *Furthermore* and says like this: "Artistic education is no good at all. I am tired of the cant which wants to force on the working classes æsthetic uplift, a better taste in wall-papers, and symphony concerts. The working classes should be taught just enough writing to apply for a job and enough reading to know whether they've got it. And enough arithmetic not to be cheated in the shops. The exceptions who want anything better will go after it and get it. Abraham Lincoln, James!" I concur. I am tempted to agree seriously with one William Cameron, who wrote ironically: "Like bathrooms, it is the worker's function to make, not use, refrigerators." There lives more health in honest dirt, believe me, than in half the tubs. I hold that the effect of a bath of poetry on the dustman can only be to put him out of conceit with his job. I am talking about the British, to whom art is an

extraneous thing, and not about, say, Russian workers, for whom art is something innate. "To speak of art as a recreation is to give it the highest social office," writes Ivor. I would much rather press into service half a dozen first-rate cricket elevens, football sides, teams of boxers and dart-players, and send them round the camps, naval schools, and aerodromes. As exponents of the British social idea they would be infinitely better than Shakespeare's plays or Shaw's harangues. Exceptions make bad rules, and equally the Bloomsbury poet caught up in the Services is not a good witness for the case Ivor is trying to establish. I believe in fostering that which is best in individual or nation, and not in forcing on him and them something alien, however admirable that thing may be in itself.

Again lunched at the little Austrian place. My hosts going off to secure some new rooms, I spent the afternoon listening to the B.B.C. and wondering why Ivor doesn't turn the heat on in that direction. Later two timid males held their breaths while Joyce descended to the basement and gave the landlady victorious notice. Proposing to celebrate this, we sallied forth. But proposing in this town is not getting. Oxford seems to be even more crowded than when I was here. The little Gloucester Arms, back-to-back with the Playhouse, whither I repaired every evening during the production of *Hedda Gabler*, was closed to-night through lack of beer. Stood four deep at the bar of the George for fifteen or twenty minutes, and couldn't get served. Why this shortage of liquor? I can only explain it on the grounds of a rabid teetotalism on the part of the authorities, or the fear lest the soldiery passing through should take it into their heads to turn into a drunken, brutal, and licentious mob with an urge towards town councillors' wives. Was so angry that I rushed my hosts off to the Randolph and ordered the best in the hotel, which included grouse and champagne. EDGAR (*smiling*). "Well, James, I look back on the day's events, and I look at what is before us. And I say with Trimalchio, 'The day is nothing; better to go straight from bed to board.'"

As soon as we get home Edgar makes a dive for the wireless. He turns it on, and we hear his friend Spike Hughes—Spike was

my friend too before this broadcast—re-telling the story of Cinderella as it might happen in Harlem. Duke Ellington records. J. A. listens for some time, and then says, "What filth! What foulness! These swing people can't hit a note in the middle or stay on it. They make a noise like a cow in labour." EDGAR. "They don't want to hit a note in the middle. And I don't want them to. I dote on cows in labour." J. A. reaches for *More than Somewhat* and reads: "'A torch song is a song which guys sing when they have the big burnt-up feeling inside themselves over a battle with their dolls.'" EDGAR. "Listen, James. I am quite unmusical. Your Brahms and your Hugo Wolf do nothing to me; this caterwauling, as you call it, does. Why do you criticise something for which you have no feeling?" J. A. "The average dance-band leader . . ." EDGAR (*interrupting*). "Ellington is not a dance-band leader in your sense. Neither is he average; he is exceptional. Don't you realise that Lou This and Jake That live by cheapening and debasing your kind of music, whereas Duke invents his own kind, which is not a vulgarisation of anything?" The broadcast ended, Edgar switches the talk on to something else: "James, do you know the passage in Gorky in which he quotes the letter of Pliny to the Emperor Trajan?" No, James doesn't. "Well, here it is." Reads: "'It soon transpired that there were many Jews—this is usually the case when one begins to investigate a crime.'" J. A. "What's remarkable about that?" EDGAR. "Only that Pliny wrote 'Christians,' not 'Jews.'" Foreseeing serious discussion, I re-introduce the Marx Brothers, and under cover of Edgar's riotous analysis, with pantomime, of *Duck Soup*, collect my thoughts about the past two days. At midnight Edgar goes unexpectedly to bed, pouring me out what whiskey he thinks good for me after champagne, and telling me not to sit up late as we have to catch the 8.40 in the morning. No books in the bedroom, presumably for the same reason. We have made an ideal trio. Edgar is a first-rate talker, I am a good listener when there's anybody to listen to, while Joyce has the quality of Runyon's Silk, the doll who knocks off a banker by the name of Israel Ib: "She seldom sticks in her oar, except

maybe to ask a question. Naturally a doll who is willing to listen instead of wanting to gab herself is bound to be popular because if there is anything most citizens hate and despise it is a gabby doll."

Aug. 31 Reply to one Nicholas Moore, who asks if he may
Monday. dedicate a sonnet-series to me :

10 Fairfax Road, N.W.6
Aug. 31, 1942

DEAR NICHOLAS MOORE,

Go ahead, dear boy !

But you must not say I have pronounced Winston Churchill to be a poet unless you qualify the statement as I qualified it. I once heard Humbert Wolfe define poetry as "the maximum of matter in the minimum of space." I wrote that if this definition be accepted then Churchill's *Great Contemporaries* shows him to be a poet.

Ever since I was fifteen I have comforted myself in moments of depression by murmuring

There is sweet music here that softer falls
Than petals from blown roses on the grass,
Or night-dews on still waters between walls
Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass ;

But it seems that for fifty years I have been wrong. Starting from next week, when I shall be sixty-five, I propose to go about the house chanting your

His pen,
Hired for its keep, strangely discovers too
That Churchill is a poet. O how strange
That time, fate, God and all should so arrange
It that he is Prime Minister to-day.
It must be nice for Agate.

It must be nice for Moore to be the author of

It that he is Prime Minister to-day.

J'en chortle ! as somebody said in another connection,

Yours sincerely,

JAMES AGATE

Sept 1 Met Keidrych Rhys at the Café Royal. A large, shock-haired, intelligent, and witty soldier. The Traddles sort. Haversack full of Welsh poems. He said about another of the unintelligible brood: "My dear sir, like all the others, he is merely a leak from Dylan Thomas's petrol-tank."

Sept. 4 Let women write on subjects they know about. I do not want to read some Wimbledon spinster's views on the amours of a Spanish bull-fighter any more than I want to hear from a Spanish miss about the love-life of an Arsenal centre-forward. The play to-night was all about British saboteurs in France, at the end of which a glamorous authoress came forward. Afterwards to the Café Royal, where at the next table sat two young American airmen arrived in England the same day. One of them leaned over to me and said, "Say, buddy, d'ya think we could take a coupla women to our hotel?" I asked what hotel they were staying at, and he mentioned one of the most respectable hostelrys in London. I told him they could not possibly do such a thing. "Aw," says airman No. 2, "don't get us wrong. We don't mean a coupla women each!" Perhaps some young woman would like to write a war play about American airmen?

Sept. 9 Sixty-five. Telegram from Jock, 'phone message from my ex-houseboy, Charlie, all the way from St Athan's, the vocal score of *Tristan* from Leo. To-day, like another, I permit myself "A Backward Glance o'er Travel'd Roads." Exactly how good a dramatic critic have I been? It is always said that I stick too little to the play and players, am too discursive, and use quotation to show off. Well, there are people who, reading of "the sweet influences of Pleiades," would accuse Job of showing off his astronomy. No more of that. I have always stuck to the point when it was worth sticking to; when not, then not.

Sept. 10 George Richards, the amusing cove I made friends
Thursday. with at Bournemouth, sends me the following :

Advance extract from *The Surrealist's Who's Who* (the editor will be grateful for emendations and corrections, which should reach him not later than June 4, 1983).

JAMES AGATE. *b.* 1858 of Sudanese stock. Was baptized six times. First became generally known with a volume of poems (1902) under the title of *Chains of Cleanliness: a Treatise in Verse on Lavatory Cisterns from the Earliest Ages down to the Present Time*. Invented the mouse-trap. In 1930 joined the League of Nations as chief delegate for Boston Spa, but was refused a seat on the Council owing to being in arrears with his contributions. After losing thirty-one by-elections was finally returned unopposed for Little Pregnancy, which seat he held far too long. Invented the corn-plaster, the stomach-pump, and the skeleton pad. Owned four yachts, two amphibious racehorses, and half the Aleutian Islands. Invented the hair-net. 1950 *m.* Priscilla, the elder daughter of Lord Halibut (*q.v.*). Awarded the freedom of Houndsditch 1960, in which year he opened the skating-pool at Balham and two swimming-rinks at Stoke Mandeville. Inventor of the safety-match. His thirty-odd volumes of memoirs (*Lumbago* I, II, III, etc.) have been banned or burned in all countries except Nazi Germany. Created first Baron Sciatica 1965. Appointed Regius Professor and Reader in Scatology at the University of Bokhara in 1970. Invented the Gothic Arch. Had a profound belief in the close relation between Buddhism and artificial teeth. *Hobby*: sex-perversion in Siamese cats. *Clubs*: Cannibals', Oodle's, Pork Chop. *Address*. The Trenches, Gidea Park (Summer: The Tudor Ruins, Tadpole-in-the-Strippet, Berks). Insane since 1980.

Sept. 11 "I am not valiant neither." I ought not to lose my
Friday. temper with every puny whipster who dislikes my brand of dramatic criticism. I am told this morning that "The *only* objects of dramatic criticism should be to tell the reader whether a play is good or bad, whether the acting is good or bad, and the reasons for these conclusions.

A. B. Walkley, I think, set the fashion of loading his criticisms with quotations—mainly in other languages—and used most of his space in shouting ‘See what a clever fellow I am!’” Now what are the facts? I have before me Shaw’s notice of *Little Eyolf*. This contains allusions to Dickens’s Artful Dodger, Grant Allen, Byron, Walter Scott, Thackeray, George Eliot, Fielding, Ibsen, Wagner, Sarah Grand, Shakespeare, Bernhardt, Irving, Duse, Leader, Rembrandt, Isaye, Sarasate, Joachim, the two de Reszkes, Calvé, Emma Eames, Lugné Poe, Arthur Roberts, and the London, Brighton, and South Coast Railway. I turn to Archer and find in an article about a farce called *Lord Tom Noddy* references to Swift, Chamfort, Gautier, and Wordsworth. To Walkley, who, in a notice of that night’s production of *The Doctor’s Dilemma*, dragged in, as they say, Brieux, Molière, Labiche, Charles Lamb, Dumas *filis*, Montaigne, and the Emperor Nero. To Montague, who, writing of the Christmas pantomime of *Sinbad the Sailor*, drew his illustrations from Ouida, Thomas à Kempis, Kipling, Molière, Meredith, and Riccoboni. Clement Scott? Shaw has rightly said of him that he was “not a great dramatic critic but a great dramatic reporter.” Readers who look to the *Sunday Times* to provide them with a reporter’s notice are taking their custom to the wrong shop.

Sept. 18 “I told you so” is impermissible only when a
 Friday. catastrophe is calamitous, not, I hold—using “catastrophe” in its dramatic sense—when it is triumphant. Readers of *Ego* 5 may remember how I came to be interested in Pamela Brown. “But she’s amazing!” said everybody after the first act of *Claudia* last night, and again at the fall of the curtain. But I wasn’t amazed, being in the position of the chemist who, having poured sulphuric acid on to zinc, isn’t surprised to see hydrogen released. I had already seen the flame of Pamela’s talent. In the autumn of 1940, at the Oxford Playhouse, I noted a performance of extreme distinction by a young and unknown actress. Her attack, intelligence, and quality generally convinced me that she could play Hedda Gabler. Now the saving grace of a repertory company is that it will listen; your com-

mercial manager has ears only for finance. I proposed the play, Eric Dance gallantly acceded, and six weeks later the new Hedda was launched and received great praise from the principal London critics. But did any London manager inquire further? I heard of none. I tried to get the piece transferred to town for a *matinée*, the company was eager, Dance offered to sacrifice the evening's receipts, and I pointed out that, any modern set serving, there would be no expenses except the front of the house and a man to pull the curtain up and down. The managers refused to listen. They went on with the old game of wringing their hands and deploring the lack of new talent. The newcomer has that *petite frimousse éveillée* which was Sarcey's way of describing Réjane's departure from conventional good looks. She has great gift of facial expression, and when she feels emotion can show it, and the kind of emotion. When she must express grief she does not, as more trumpeted discoveries have done, bury her head in a cupboard. Her acting possesses both pace and variety. It is good enough to stand up to a heroine who is a tiresome combination of the innocent in Besant and Rice's *Golden Butterfly*, Ibsen's Nora, and Bret Harte's M'liss, to which is added a strong infusion of mother-complex. Now, perhaps, some manager will give us a play that can stand up to Pamela. Why not a *matinée* of *Hedda*? I should not dream of suggesting a run for this masterpiece unless one could entice the public with a cast composed of Deanna Durbin as the General's daughter, Harpo Marx as Tesman, Bing Crosby as Lovborg, and W. C. Fields as Judge Brack!

Oct. 7 I wonder if I have found the missing motive in the
 Wednesday. case of William Herbert Wallace, the Liverpool insurance agent found guilty of murdering his wife and sentenced to death. Wallace's Diary contains this entry:

March 20, 1929. Listened-in to *The Master Builder* by Ibsen. This is a fine thing and shows clearly how a man may build up a fine career, and as the world has it, be a great success, and yet in his own mind feel that he has been an

utter failure, and how ghastly a mistake he has made to sacrifice love and the deeper comforts of life in order to achieve success. Curious that Julia did not appreciate this play. I feel sure she did not grasp the inner significance and real meaning of the play.

Wallace's counsel stressed the absence of motive. But I can quite well imagine a row about the exact meaning of Hilda Wangel's "I heard harps in the air," followed by a Biff and a Bang. The medical evidence showed that the wretched woman had received five biffs and six bangs, eleven in all, on the cranium and delivered from behind, apparently by the time-honoured blunt instrument. Who was the murderer? Could it have been what Damon Runyon would call Julia's ever-loving husband? Perhaps "ever-loving" gives us a clue. Winifred Duke, in her excellent novel *Skin for Skin*, founded on this case, suggests that the husband, whom she calls Bruce, murdered his wife for the reason that he just couldn't stand living with her any longer. And a very reasonable reason too. After all, an Old Dutch on the cover of a song and an Old Dutch at home are two very different propositions. We shall never know how many Darbys have put away their Joans. Or what things other than blessings have been poured on the frosty pow of John Anderson, my jo, John. Life at the old-age pension stage is a brittle thing, and an overworked doctor will not be tempted to look beyond natural causes, provided, of course, that there has been no amateurish work with a hatchet. And the Wallace case was a highly professional affair. It was planned with extreme care and extraordinary imagination. Either the murderer was Wallace, or it wasn't. If it wasn't, then here at last is the perfect murder. If it was, then here is a murder so nearly perfect that the Court of Criminal Appeal, after examining the evidence, decided to quash Wallace's conviction. He died in 1933. There was great competition among the more excitable newspapers for the statement it was presumed Wallace would make on his release. The *Empire News* won. At least, it was in that paper's motor-car that he drove away from the Court of Criminal Appeal. And at once fell asleep. The special reporter kept a sharp ear for any words

hat might fall. "She was bending down," he heard the sleeping man murmur. And then, the car giving a bump, Wallace woke up.

Oct. 13 Letter from Norman Collins :
Tuesday.

Evenlode

Nicholas Way

Northwood

October 12, 1942

DEAR JAMES,

Let's begin another amusing correspondence !

Your review of my novel *Anna* has been read, re-read, and deeply regretted—for your sake. About the merits of the book you may be right. Or wrong. But you of all people must not let yourself be right—you may be, and certainly were about those of my novels which you liked—for the wrong reasons.

You contend that novelists ought to write about things which they know at first-hand. Really, James, I am surprised at you ! Without a blush for mixing the company, I ask whether Sigrid Undset was drawing on recollections of her early youth when she wrote *Kristin Lavransdatter*. Did good Sir Walter go galumphing across the plains of Asia Minor before he wrote *The Talisman* ? How much of *The Fortunes of Richard Mahoney* derived from Henry Handel Richardson's experiences of gold-digging in Australia ? Did Dickens go through the French Revolution ? Was Shakespeare ever in Rome or Illyria ? Did not James Agate (to fly high for a moment) write a book on Rachel without being exactly a contemporary ?

And for the second time, really James ! To suggest that there can be a "reasonable" length for a novel ! "Reasonable" length for whom ? For those who like short novels ? Or medium-length ones ? Or long ones ? On this point let me tell you a little parable. There was once a University Extension Course on "The English Novel" for women teachers. At the end of the lecture an imposing harriidan said acidly, "The lecturer has told us about short novels, and about long novels... Would he now tell us what is the *correct* length for a novel ?" (I can vouch for that story, because I was the lecturer.)

In short, James, you have blundered. You have stepped down. You are dishonoured. As I see it, there is nothing for it but hemp or hemlock for you now. I do not see how even the privilege of reprinting this letter, free of charge, and with my cordial good wishes, in *Ego X*, could possibly ease your conscience sufficiently for you to face the indignity of going on living.

Yours,
NORMAN COLLINS

My reply :

10 Fairfax Road, N.W 6
Tuesday, October 13, 1942

DEAR NORMAN,

Delightful !

But why not let well alone ? Why walk into the lion's den twice ? Daniel didn't. Since playing with you is no good I must now get to work on you.

About first- and second-hand novelists. The best shot at confounding me would have been *Salammbô*. I agree that Flaubert never saw dead and dying elephants piled one on top of another, or heard one called Fury of Baal, caught by his leg chains, scream from noon till night with an arrow in his eye. But he makes me see and hear them, and smell the blood and taste the sweat of the soldiers' naked bodies. The book reeks of Carthage, whereas *Anna* reeks of Camberwell. But then it is very difficult to write like Flaubert. My *Rachel* reeks of Paris in the 'forties and 'fifties. But then again it is very difficult to write like Agate ! In other words, you are just about a good enough writer to set down the things you know. To write about things you don't know wants genius and you haven't got it, my dear boy. At least, not that kind.

In the matter of length. There is a correct length for every novel. This is attained when the novelist's envelope fits his emotional or intellectual content exactly. From which it follows that *War and Peace* and *The Young Visitors* are both the right length. Your book is like the Cromwell Road: it doesn't know when to stop.

Will you now please sit down and write a novel about the middle-aged publisher who becomes a Home Guard ? You

might begin with a party at Northwood, in the grounds of Norman Collins, Esq. But you must stop at the moment when your Home Guard goes into action against an air-borne German tank, since, your name being Norman and not Gustave, you don't know about such things. Correct length for this book 87,362 words.

End of amusing correspondence.

JAMES

Oct. 14 Marie Tempest is dead.

Wednesday. The essential truth about Mary can be put into a sentence. She had a small, exquisite talent and was generally recognised as an actress of the first rank. Yet I do not remember that she ever played in Goldsmith, Sheridan, Pinero, Wilde, Galsworthy, Shaw. New movements passed her by: or rather she passed them by. And she was wise. I remember an occasion when, on the wireless, she played Mrs Alving in *Ghosts*, and over the air came the accents of *The Marriage of Kitty*. Inside its limitations Marie Tempest's art was superb. Over all her acting was a *patina*, the result of years of study to make perfection yet more perfect. Her technique was flawless, and her comedy had everything that comedy should have, except the gift of tears. Mary hadn't a shred of pathos, and her rare attempts in that direction could have made only a crocodile weep. She had unsurpassable elegance, exquisite poise, and a sense of proportion which enabled her to give her effects their exact value and no more. Oddly enough, she overdid one gesture which she took from Jeanne Granier—that of putting finger to forehead. She had a great sense of humour. I remember the first night of a piece called *Her Shop* in which she had to say, "It's very nice, of course, to be young and beautiful. But there are other qualities, thank God!" I think I never heard a line better delivered. Her voice was indescribable and inimitable; her "squawk" will not be heard again. Beneath the patrician layers there was a note which suggested that, like Rachel, like Réjane, and our own Mrs Jordan, she knew her plebeian world.

Off the stage Maria, as many people called her, was a continual delight. My most endearing memory is finding her in pyjamas on the morning after the fire in Avenue Road preparing to demolish the piano with the coal-hammer. On my objecting that the result wouldn't look in the least like fire damage, she turned the hammer round and ran the spike along three shelves of rather shabby calf bindings. Again I protested. "The hose-pipe, dear, the hose-pipe!" she said. Her letters show that she looked upon the provinces as an unspeakable No-man's Land, and regarded first-rate acting as something to be seen only in the capital. In this she had the support of the French, who long ago invented that useful tradeswoman, the *tragédienne de province*. Mary would have cut out her tongue sooner than go down to history as a *comédienne de province*. She hated touring. "*Quelle vie de DOG!*" she wrote.

Her *volonté* became legendary; she was the very genius of the indomitable. In great measure a tartar, she gave that side of her character full rein. Her best rôle was that of Marie Tempest. In this she was superb.

Oct. 24 If there is anything those two citizens, Jock and
Saturday. James, despise it is a gabby highbrow doll, and
 such a doll as X is apt to have at his parties. Have
written to X declining to dine with two female highbrows,
pleading that Jock is too young and I am too old to be bothered.
Women, especially intellectual women, have no social tact;
whenever they meet a dramatic critic they fall on him hammer
and tongs and want to know what he thinks about the new plays.
Which means that he has to listen while they tell him what they
think. Women have no notion of letting a man be. They go on
clicking their brains at him like knitting-needles, until he is
exhausted. At the Club the other day the company at my table
included Bud Flanagan, Benno Moiseiwitsch, Douglas Furber,
Spikes Hughes, and Joe Batten, who had brought along Herbert
Sutcliffe and Abe Waddington. *Not one word was spoken about
cricket.* Added a postscript to my letter to X, giving a list of
the women we *will* dine with.

Oct. 27 Jock writes :
Tuesday.

33 King Street
Covent Garden
W.C.2
26th October 1942

But, dear Jamie, you have no right to identify me with your views on ladies to sup with (copy of your letter to X just received)! I wouldn't be very willing to sup with any of your Permissibles or Impermissibles (excepting Mary Hutchinson, who sometimes asks me, and Queen Mary, who doesn't!). Clemence Dane—I suspect it is through some ass's practical joke—has long been convinced that I am a telephoning blackmailer. Caroline Lejeune once overheard me call her a Wallachian peasant in disguise (she always ties her hair up in a hanky) and has never so much as glared at me since. Caryl Brahms has never begun to forgive me for dubbing her—to some common friend—as “a remorseless mixture of intensity and vivacity.” Dilys Powell is a darling *but* a film critic (and I want to forget films at supper-time). Gladys Calthrop—though I met her once at a birthday party of yours—is oblivious, and looks at me unrecognisingly at first nights through her serenely handsome eyelashes. And Rebecca West once said she wouldn't be seen dead with me. (At least she said *that* of all your satellites in *Ego*, and I naturally took it to include me. Very soon afterwards I was caught in a severe air raid in Baker Street near her flat. While waiting for a train at Marylebone I sent her a letter-card saying, “Dear Miss West—You were very nearly seen dead with me to-night—Jock.” I don't think R. W. ever got this missive, because the pillar-box outside Marylebone Station had vanished next morning when I returned from the country.) I don't know any of your other ladies, and have no desire to meet or not to meet them. Give *me* actresses to sup with. I see you don't mention a single actress. They are the jolliest. They usually eat a good deal, which saves a lot of talk, whereas literary ladies just pick and wrangle. Besides, all the actresses I know act quite badly off-stage. They nearly always flatter you in an obvious way (which is always pleasant). Or else they indulge in blunt reprisals (which makes them look absurd to everybody). And later on (over the coffee, I mean) they tell

you their secret ambitions and their private antipathies (which are respectively impressive and delicious). I find them, in short, sincere and natural, as ladies go.

Always your

JOCK

Nov. 9 Monday. A glorious day, in every sense of the word. Alexander's great victory and the invasion by the Americans of French North Africa have put the people of this country into better fettle than they have known since 1925, when, at Melbourne on the third day of the second Test Match, Hobbs and Sutcliffe put on 283 runs for England's first wicket and sent the Stock Exchange up two points. I am so far Conservative that I believe almost nothing I see in the popular Press, and very little I hear on the wireless. Unless a thing is corroborated in *The Times* it remains, for me, rumour. To-day's good news has received the august sanction, reinforced by the "Old and True" selection. This is Chesterton's

"The high tide!" King Alfred cried.

"The high tide and the turn."

Nov. 12 Thursday. *Ego* 5 officially published to-day. It had been announced for November 5, which accounts for some of the notices being a trifle premature. The one most obviously flattering is by Elizabeth Bowen in the *Tatler*: "When, from day to day, the top of the furnace is opened for restoking, one finds oneself almost intimidated by the expectant interior roar."

I put *Punch* next. "H. K." (Hugh Kingsmill?) writes:

Every one, it is said, has one good book inside him, and, if this be so, it would be unkind to suggest that Mr James Agate is the exception that proves the rule. All one can in fairness say is that his good book is not among the thirty-six he has so far produced.

To justify this statement "H. K." must have read all thirty-six books. To continue in feverish search after thirty-five disappointments—here's tribute indeed!

As always happens when an article is cut, most of Osbert Sitwell's wit has evaporated from his notice in the *Sunday Times*, of which he had sent me a copy. I should have liked the sentence: "When Mr Agate is summoned to the office of his solicitors to discuss new methods—on the top of those already in force—of cutting down his expenditure, my soul is purged with terror and with pity." But it was not to be, and even without it the review is a beauty. I like the notion that I join Dr Johnson as one of the tantrumists of letters.

Most notable, perhaps, is the *New Statesman* review by Raymond Mortimer, which is magnanimity's self. About this George Richards writes to me this morning:

You could have knocked me down with a flock mattress when I picked up a *New Statesman* with a pair of tongs to-day and read of your Famous Victory. The conquest only included acres of barren sand-dunes, it is true, but what a Rout! Mortimer was never one of your True Blue, *i.e.*, Pink Yapping Bloomsbury Yahoos, but merely runs with the wrong pack, a survivor from a comparatively civilised epoch when skill in one's craft (if that happened to be a writer's) was not necessarily held against one.

Nov. 14 Being reviewed by Willson Disher is rather like
Saturday. being reviewed by Alice's White Knight. Never-
" theless I detach from the woolly entanglement that
I shall not win fame by "emptying wastepaper baskets into publishers' laps instead of salvage bins."

The reviewer of the *Times Lit. Supp.* cannot decide whether *Ego*; is causerie, scrap-book, or diary. Astonishingly, for a *Times* reviewer, he holds that "what the audience he [the diarist] eventually reaches hopes to get from him is a view of people and things unclouded by fear of the law of libel or even respect for the rules of common courtesy." In other words, I should have done better to hold up my Diary during my lifetime and fill it with accounts of how X, the well-known actor, never goes on the stage until he is drunk; with what persons and what kind Y, the famous pianist, sleeps; and how Z, the great

painter, cheats at cards. I would not desire immortality at this price; I could have it to-morrow with a volume of *chroniques scandaleuses* beginning with myself! What my Diary tries to do is to give some kind of permanence to such fleeting interests as come my way. I have published in my lifetime, because, as Doctor Johnson so nearly said, we shall not treat with publishers in the grave.

Nov. 15 Violet Vanbrugh, who died last week, had stature, *Sunday.* presence, gait, and a deep, resonant voice, but she brought more than these qualities to her Lady Macbeth, one of the best I ever saw. To any sensitive playgoer it was at once obvious that the actress had been stirred out of her normal orbit and projected into a world other than that of her Muriel Glaydes and Lady Aletheas. The late Allan Monkhouse divined the actress's intentions when he wrote: "The exaltation of the part requires that Lady Macbeth should move above and beyond the human levels; there must be no lapse from the diction of high passion; the great, dim exemplars like Siddons and Ristori must have one more worthy follower." But, alas, this Lady Macbeth was handicapped by her spouse, who made the Thane of Cawdor a city magnate with accesses of hysteria. Which prompted A. N. M. to ask as we left the theatre whether I thought murder could be "as serious as all that came to?"

But Violet was not always on her high horse, and perhaps more's the pity. Yet of her performances in the comedies of Sutro and others it was possible to write that she "contrived with astonishing skill to put a human edge on to creatures of frivolity." No one would have proclaimed her a great actress, but she was a very good one. Her name did not appear in the casts of Ibsen and Shaw; there was a world elsewhere which she illumined by her own special talents. She brought to the theatre a dignity which nothing could impair, and when the fashion and the favour ebbed—as they will after fifty years—she continued in her loyal devotion to the stage and what she judged to be its best interests. During her later years she was frequently to be seen at first nights. No need on these occasions to instruct

the young playgoer on which side of the footlights distinction of the old school was to be found.

Nov. 20 Get home to find in the *Daily Telegraph*: "There Friday. is a lot [in *Ego* 5] about dull people." What the inexact fellow means is: "He writes uninterestingly about lively and exciting people." But he doesn't say this and so I pink him, very much as I did his predecessor two years ago:

The Telegraph

(Don't make me laugh)

Holds that Baring, Beecham, Beerbohm, Belloc, Bridie, Cocteau, Coward, Henson, Hicks, Lutyens, Margot, Maugham, Priestley, Shaw, Wells, my beloved Rebecca, and some six hundred illustrious and witty dead whose names I cull,
Are dull.

Nov. 24 If I were involved in a murder charge *à la* Herbert Tuesday. Wallace would any jury believe this? Invited to dine with Lady Juliet Duff at 3 Belgrave Place, I left my house at 7.30. Went by tube to Oxford Circus, say 7.45. Took a taxi and was put down at 7.55—"Here you are, sir"—at what turned out to be the wrong end of Eaton Square. Another taxi landed me at a vast mansion, which turned out to be unoccupied, in, I think, Pont Street. After which two policemen and four civilians misdirected me. Dearth of taxis. Finally I got a third, whose driver was on his way to supper. I explained my plight, and, being a kindly soul, he offered to help me. He set me down in a mews which I had explored an hour earlier. I was about to give up when in the dark a pleasant voice said, "Can I help you?" It turned out to belong to Simon Carnes, the revue-writer, sent out as a search-party. It was 8.55. I had wandered about for exactly one hour.

Nov. 28 As I perambulate London I see pictures which Saturday. demand this and that painter. In certain lights on summer evenings Fairfax Road is the perfect Utrillo. To-day in the purlieus of Camden Town I saw some-

thing which called for a poet. This was an aged rocking-horse, so begrimed that it had lost its spots. Hardly a hair left on its mane, and where the tail should have been merely what George Carney used to call "a naperture." Even the littlest kiddies, passing on their way from school the miserable junk-shop outside which it stood, heeded it not. The deadeast deaths are the best, says Montaigne, and the indifference of the children should have told the rocking-horse that his day was done. But did it? As I got into the taxi again I turned round and caught, or thought I caught, a late spark in that glazed eye and the remains of defiance in those dusty nostrils. Or am I drooling in the worst Barrie manner?

Dec. 1 Watching an old, worn pony pulling a heavy load up
Tuesday. the steep, slippery slope of Lower Regent Street, I
 reflect how much closer I am to the poor beast than
to Betty Grable.

Dec. 8 A delightful letter from Liverpool saying, "My grati-
Tuesday. tude for *Ego* takes the form of what may be loosely
 called a poem. Whatever you think of it, it very
likely has a 'rarity' value, since it is the first time—I will venture
to guess—that you have been praised in verse by a Catholic
priest." The poem:

HOMMAGE A JAMES AGATE

The critic of the *Sunday Times*
Discourses of departed mimes,
Turning his bright AGATHIAN limes
 On Garrick, Irving, Kean.
He likes to put the modern race
Of actors in their proper place,
And though he writes with charm and grace,
 His *plume* can be *maligne*.

Enstalled and comfortless, forlorn,
He views the modern stage with scorn,
And if you say "a star is born"
 Remarks (in French) "Boloney!"

He sighs for Malibran (*la fève*),
 He writes some *Nouveaux Contes Scabreux*
Pour tromper son ennui un peu . . .
 Then goes to buy a pony.

Ah! *certainly*, a brilliant pen he wields;
 What riches rare his mem'ry yields
 From lowly and exotic fields—
 Amanda Ros to Stein.
 Pale highbrows shrink, pretensions die,
 Before that keen, judicial eye:
 Producers quail when he is nigh—
 But ask him out to dine.

ENVOI

Before that "great resolver, Death,"
 Deprives both you and me of breath
 (Like "golden lads," as Shakespeare saith
 —And who could say it better?)
 Permit, me, Sir, to call you friend,
 And say, "Though suits and writs impend,
 And you can ne'er make end meet end,
 Here's one, at least, your debtor."

CHARLES W. RIGBY

Dec. 9 Ran into Moray McLaren at the Café Royal and
Wednesday. found him in great conversational form. "The
 Poles are like the Irish. They have a contempt for
 time, a contempt for death and the material things of life. Yet
 they are, in the long run, far more realistic than their Saxon
 neighbours and overlords. Do you realise that Poland is the
 only over-run country which has not produced a single Quisling?
 The Slovaks are the Welsh, full of spurious charm and bogus
 religiosity. The Czechs are Lowland Scots, patient, industrious,
 worthy, and dull. The Serbs are the Highland Scots—the best.
 After the war I should say to Germany: 'You have made the
 best toys in the world. With the assistance of the Austrians you
 have made the best music in the world. You have the second
 best scenery in Europe. Your philosophy, if not translated into

action, is harmless, amusing, and, for young men, intoxicating. Therefore you shall be allowed to go on making toys and music and attracting foreign tourists. You shall philosophise to your hearts' content. You shall be rich and well-fed and happy. But never again shall you be allowed to make so much as a single popgun. And we shall come over every three months to see that you don't.' "

*Dec. 18 Barry Lupino has given me Charlie Chaplin's cane! And
Friday. with it a formal guarantee in the form of a letter:*

*I Gramville House
Gramville Place
London, W.1*

DEAR JIMMIE,

Herewith Charlie's cane as promised. It was given to Stanley by Chaplin when Stan was last in America. It is the original cane used by Charlie in his first film. Here is something which may interest you: Mrs O'Shea, Stanley's mother-in-law, who died a few years ago aged 86, used to look after Charlie when he was a young boy, and in fact made him his first pair of long pants without pockets, to enable Charlie to control his hands and not slummock. Charlie slit the sides and sewed two socks on. Thus defeating the Old Girl.

Yours always,
BARRY

Careful between whom I sat, I lunched at the Club, keeping both eyes on the cane, which I laid on the table in front of me, afterwards taking it to a picture-framer to have a case made for it. Then to the Paris Cinema in Lower Regent Street, where I broadcast with Gerald Moore about chamber music. Rather nonsense as far as I was concerned, and I really don't know why I do this sort of thing as at best my musical opinions are amateurish, the rehearsing and expressing of them takes up the most of an afternoon and evening, and what I get after deducting tax and expenses is less than the price of a bottle of champagne.

Having left Leo to finish an article on a silly film, I am staggered to find under my name in this week's *Tatler* :

I always think the happiest solution to this business of two men in love with one woman, or two women with one man, is that of Goethe, who ends his *Stella* by making the hero go off with both his wives, saying in effect : " Now, girls, you can just share me, cut and come again. No jealousy or any of that silly caper, or I'll sack you both and take on another coupla broads, see ? "

Dec. 20 Sunday. Christmas collation at Francis Sullivan's from one o'clock till black-out. Larry, a magnificent host, stood most of the time a Colossus in his own drawing-room, letting the party swirl about him ; it was fun to sit on the stairs and watch the guests dart under his arms and between his legs like the Chevalier Tannhäuser's "*valets de bain* or little fish" in the Beardsley story. Half the stage seemed to be there, and the talk was as good as one would expect. I sat in a knot with Mary Merrall and Martita Hunt, and listened to Eric Portman telling wholly malicious and wildly probable stories of the leading ladies he has played with, including one famous for her "sex-repeal." When the conversation got back to Irving—it always does—Franklyn Dyall told us the following. It seems that during the American visit one of his company left him to start in business on his own. Then Irving : " I went to see the—er—the young man in *The Forest Lovers* [heavily accenting the last word]. Somebody called Prosper le Gai [again the heavy accent]. Hmmm. Romantic *figure*. Beautiful *armour*. Hmmm. Looked as though he'd piddled himself. Beg your pardon, Ellen." I am aware that this story is meaningless for anybody who does not realise that Irving looked like every English prelate since Lanfranc.

Dec. 22 Tuesday. Took part in a Transatlantic debate. The American team consisted of Dorothy Parker, Ilka Chase, Arthur Schwartz, the composer of light music, and a revue comedian name of Bolger. On our side were Susan Ertz, Pamela

Frankau, Osbert Lancaster, and myself. Mrs Parker asking me why men insist on giving women vanity-bags as presents instead of war bonds, I told her about a film I saw yesterday concerning a woman who, inheriting a million dollars, said to her husband, "I've decided what to do with the money. From to-day on, I'm never going to let you see me in the same frock twice !"

1943

Jan. 3 Sunday. In his exquisitely written *Observer* article Ivor Brown describes *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as being "full of earth and timber; magic glimmerings do indeed light the sky, but that same sky is also dotted with 'russet-pated choughs' and bordered by 'far-off mountains turned into clouds,' a perfect image of our misty landscape." Lovely! After which comes the statement that "the forest is anywhere in England, not somewhere in Mendelssohnia." M'yes. And last, "The fairies are not alien other-worldly creatures, but ourselves in our livelier, more fantastical moments." At which I call a halt. Ivor gives as basis for his Theory of Shakespeare's Fairies, Titania's

Playing on pipes of corn, and versing love.

Could anything be more naughty? He knows as well as I do that this is the Fairy Queen's description of Oberon when he stole

away from fairy land,
And in the shape of Corin sat all day.

(Italics mine, not Shakespeare's.) Surely there is one respect in which the little people must conform to human logic: they are not to be defined in terms of that which they are not. In citing Titania, Ivor, with maximum infelicity, has called a witness for the other side.

He is tremendously impressed by the fact that the Fairy Queen, after providing "the finest description ever made of that familiar imposition, the English summer," launches out into some stuff about the female ivy enringing the barky fingers of the elm. Can my friend really think that because Titania botanises on occasion she is no immortal but a mortal like the rest of us? Judged on these lines the First Murderer in *Macbeth*, with his "The west yet glimmers with some streaks of day," is no murderer but a poet; and the First Carrier in *Henry IV, Part I*,

with his "Charles' wain is over the new chimney," is no carrier but an Astronomer Royal *manqué*. Now if these murderers and carriers remain murderers and carriers despite the poetising and star-gazing forced on them by their author, then I contend that Titania remains fairy in spite of the fact that, when Shakespeare's gardening fit is on, she talks pure Mr Middleton. If the immortals in this play are mortals slightly above themselves—which is Ivor's case in a nutshell—then there might be some excuse for the late Cecil Sharp's arrangements of old folk tunes, sounding like four-square, rather stuffy Christmas carols, which were used in the Old Vic production in 1929. But if they are, in Oberon's words, "spirits of another sort," then I challenge the most frenzied Tudorite to point to a single passage in the English music of the period which breathes the insubstantial air, or begins to turn the key in that door which a German Jew of the early nineteenth century threw wide open. Were, indeed, the fairies of this play unethereal "emanations of the English country," then one might well suppose them spiritual first cousins of Hardy's eldest Dewy. "Your brassman is a rafting dog—well and good; your reed-man is a dab at stirring ye—well and good; your drum-man is a rare bowel-shaker—good again. But I don't care who hears me say it, nothing will spak to your heart wi' the sweetness o' the man of strings." I take it that Ivor wants us to believe that the wood in this play is Yalbury Wood, and the proper music to it the Mellstock villagers discoursing Tudorly. But, of course, without clarinets. "Clar'nets was death," said Old William. "Death they was!" echoed Mr Penny. I suspect our Tudorites of finding death in Mendelssohn's horns blowing of Elfland, oh, so little faintly and so triumphantly! In the meantime, is it not significant that, whereas Berlioz, Tschaikowsky, and Ambroise Thomas handled in some sort *Hamlet*; Locke, Verdi, and Milhaud *Macbeth*; Rossini, Verdi, and Coleridge-Taylor *Otello*; and Nicolai, Verdi, Elgar, and Vaughan Williams the plays enshrining Falstaff, no composer, great or little, has dared to lay a finger on that play which, in 1826, Mendelssohn with four chords made his own for ever?

Jan. 15 Took the chair at the meeting called by Leslie Henson
Friday. at the Saville Theatre on behalf of the Opening of
 Theatres on Sundays. Had Lewis Casson on my right
 and Will Hay on my left. It was all most amusing and muddle-
 headed, and I felt like the calm spot in the centre of a vortex in
 a whirlpool of red herrings. Nobody put forward the essential
 thing to be debated—that if the general weal demands Sunday
 opening the profession should acquiesce and arrange its conscience
 and its business affairs accordingly. In my view actors and
 actresses who cannot do this should abandon the profession in
 favour of those who can, and see if they have any better luck as
 printers, nurses, and everybody else who has to work on Sunday
 night. I kept this to myself, however, and gave no inkling of
 which way my sympathies lay.

Some time after midnight a well-known actress rang up. She
 and her husband were coming round to the Villa Volpone. I
 tried all sorts of things—including my Sarah record—to keep
 them off the vexed question. But it was no use, and what, after
 all, can an elderly critic do when a beautiful woman throws
 herself at his feet like Mrs Kendal at the feet of Mr Kendal in
The Ironmaster? They had ordered a taxi for two o'clock, and
 at half-past I suggested that the driver might like a drink. They
 acquiesced, after which the lady resumed her impassioned appeal
 to be allowed to spend Sunday evening darning her husband's
 socks with her husband looking on. Bed around four.

Jan. 16 "Is your journey really necessary?" Perhaps
Saturday. not. But I couldn't resist the implication in
 Blanche Robey's letter that I might like to see the
 old man in pantomime again. The 11.15 to Bristol was practi-
 cally empty. Lunched at the Grand, and then drove round to see
 the sights—horrid, depressing sights. Complete desolation over
 small, sharply defined areas. Many churches gone, but the most
 beautiful of them unharmed. I get the impression that Bristol
 is much more touched by the war than London, this is probably
 true of all the big provincial cities. Nobody about except the
 troops.

The first pantomime in which I saw George was *Robinson Crusoe*. "Old, old, Master Shallow," said Falstaff, when asked whether a certain *bona roba* still held her own. And Shallow said: "Nay, she's old; she cannot choose but be old; certain she's old; and had Robin Nightwork, by old Nightwork, before I came to Clement's Inn." That which befell Robin's mother must equally befall Robinson's; she cannot choose but be old. It is a matter of forty-five years since I first saw this great player assume bonnet and dolman. I saw him just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere he just began to move in, glittering like the morning star, full of life, and splendour and joy. And never, as Burke didn't say, were these optics dazzled by a more delightful vision. If not in this pantomime then in an earlier one an elephant used to call for the star at his lodgings and squat on the kerb till a sufficient crowd had collected, when a frock-coated figure, collarless, with brow circumspectly cinct, and carrying an odd little cane, would mount on to the animal's back and ride down to the theatre indifferent to the mob, wrapped in his own thoughts, and as if this were his usual mode of conveyance. Was some of the old exuberance missing to-night? Possibly. But will anybody insist that Beethoven in his Third Manner retained everything of the frolicsome First or tempestuous Second? To Robey, too, must be allowed his third period. After the storm comes the calm, and it is to be conceded that those over-the-wall squabbles with Mrs Moggridge belong, and may now be relegated, to the order of happy, far-off things and battles long ago.

Jan. 17 Was entertained at lunch with some members of the
Sunday. company. George seemed a little tired; I did my
 best to keep the talk going, and he whispered, "I'll
 bet the folks around are saying, 'There's Robey making 'em
 laugh!'" And I thought I detected something very like wistfulness. His modesty is unimpaired, witness his confession that he once refused to be one of Cinderella's Ugly Sisters on the ground that the other was to be Fred Emney. "Fred *was* a woman; I should have been merely a red-nosed comedian in petticoats."

Jan. 19 Enormously flattered to read the fourth leader in *Tuesday*. to-day's *Times* beginning :

It is pleasant to think that the name of Mr James Agate will go down to posterity indissolubly joined with that of Mr Joseph Smiggers. When occupying the chair at a somewhat tempestuous meeting of the theatrical profession he smoothed the wrinkles on many sable brows by ruling that certain expressions were to be understood in a Pickwickian sense. Everybody knows who Mr Agate is ; he needs no further fame, but his companion has scarcely enjoyed his due, and many people might have to scratch their heads before recalling him. Yet Joseph Smiggers, Esq. P.V.P., M.P.C.—let us accord him his full title—took the chair at the meeting when the immortal phrase was first used.

And for the rest of the day I went about the house murmuring the article's last sentence : " We are all, comparatively speaking, brimming over with *l'esprit de l'escalier*, but only genius can seize the irrecapturable moment."

Jan. 20 Here is a really brilliant pun reported by Spike *Wednesday*. Hughes, himself a first-class wit. (" The Metro-Goldwyn-Meyerbeer Choir " was his invention.) The discussion had turned upon a newspaper article entitled " Nervousness in the Vatican." A wine bibber, normally reputed to be slow-witted, chipped in : " But they've got the wrong heading. Surely it ought to be : ' Shattered Nerve du Pape ' ! "

Percy Cudlipp, editor of the *Herald*, a most amusing fellow, pretended at lunch to-day that he had heard the late Mr Justice Rigby Swift, whom nothing could deprive of his parentheses, deliver sentence of death in the following manner : " The sentence of the Court upon you (*kindly close the doors, Usber, for the noises of the street are a considerable distraction and the prisoner may not hear the sentence*)—is that you be hanged by the (*I must also request that the windows be fastened ; there is a severe draught in the Court*)—neck until you are (*persons in the public gallery will be ejected unless they realise that this is not a theatre*)—dead."

Feb. 7 Sunday. At the Café Royal an ex-dramatic critic who has gone all Russian came up to me and said, "About that rubbish you've been writing in the *Express*. Critical standards are all rot. You'd have been a better dramatic critic if you'd never read Montague or seen Bernhardt. And a better book critic if you'd never read Sainte-Beuve or Dickens."

"Tell me," I said with all the mildness I could muster, "should I be a better film critic if I'd never seen Emil Jannings or Charlie Chaplin?"

"Yes," he said. "Don't you realise that you're over forty?"

"Over sixty."

"Forty will do. No man has a right to be a critic after forty. It's a young world we're living in to-day, and we've abolished the old standards."

"Tell me something about the new standards," I said.

"There's only one," he replied, "and that's actuality. Go into the streets, the shops, and the pubs, and if the actors you see on the stage are like the people you meet there, that's good acting. And if the characters in novels are like them, that's good novel-writing."

"I did think of doing a little dog-racing on Saturday," I murmured.

But he didn't hear me.

"Don't you realise," he shouted, "that Max Miller is of more value to the present generation than Michael Angelo, and that Vera Lynn is more alive than Leonardo da Vinci?"

"I quite agree," I said, using a poor joke to keep my temper, "that the Marx Brothers are funnier than Karl Marx."

But the young man wasn't listening. He went on, "Must you be ninety before you realise that a live donkey is worth more than a dead lion?"

"But surely," I protested, "you've got it the wrong way round. What you've been trying to tell me is that your live lions are better than my dead donkeys!"

Alas, he was already out of earshot.

I think I put up a pretty good defence, but I must confess that I am a little worried about my attitude to modern art.

When I got home I looked again at *Modern Reading*, opening it at a poem by Mayakovsky :

And you who spend the nights
carousing
and mornings reading in warm lavatories
about newly decorated heroes—
I'd rather spend my time
serving pine-apple juice to whores in brothels
than sit with you
trouserless bastards.

Try as I will, I cannot regard this as poetry. In my *Sunday Times* this morning I find Desmond MacCarthy telling me that T. S. Eliot has never written with "a more musically modulated, careful simplicity" than in his new religious poem *Little Gidding*. And here, too, is Ernest Newman announcing that he is prepared to be told that people find Britten's *Sinfonia da Requiem* "ugly," "shapeless," and "confused." Ernest's explanation for this is that once in every three hundred years music undergoes "a fundamental upheaval in vocabulary, in idiom, and in imaginative background." Music began by being "basically contrapuntal," after which it became "basically harmonic." It is now moving on, says Ernest, "under an inexorable law to a phase for which we have as yet no adequate distinguishing name." And I remember how, in that pantomime of *Jack and the Beanstalk* long ago, George Robey used to say, "First it was gold, then it was beans. *What is it now?*" It may, of course, be that the Hamlet of the future will be right to take his standard of English from the four-ale bar; that critic would certainly be a fool who failed to recognise the energy in the Russian poet. It may be that there is some kind of non-Tennysonian music in

If you came this way,
Taking any route, starting from anywhere,
At any time or at any season,
It would always be the same: you would have to put off
Sense and notion. You are not here to verify,
Instruct yourself or inform curiosity
Or carry report.

(I have, of course, carefully picked Eliot's flattest lines.) It may

be that this afternoon's wireless excerpts from Alban Berg—I could not have tuned in more opportunely—excruciating to my ears, are enchanting to those which Ernest manages to project into the future. As a critic I am perilously poised and cannot afford to come down on the wrong side. That *all* the arts should agree in moving in the direction of what seems to me to be ugliness is a danger-signal no critic can afford to ignore. I cannot believe that all artists have suddenly gone out of their minds. Or that they are merely forcing themselves to feel in this new way, all originality on the old lines having been used up. This would make them charlatans in spite of themselves, and I do not believe that all modern artists are charlatans. I am old enough to remember the time when the plays of Ibsen were considered immoral, the operas of Wagner and Richard Strauss cacophonous, and the paintings of Gauguin and Rousseau libels on the human form. Wherefore I will not come down on that side of the fence. Now I have re-written my favourite quotation from Balzac: “Il est si facile de nier ce que l'on ne comprend pas,” so that it reads: “Il est si facile de *louer* ce que l'on ne comprend pas.” I must suppose that Ernest would know if somebody played a wrong note in the middle of *Wozzeck*, that Eric Newton would never mistake an unmeant goitre for the genuine Modigliani article, and that Desmond is unspooofable. And since I do not possess this gift of intuition I shall not come down on that side of the fence either. What is left? Obviously I must remain poised above the maelstrom, coupling grace with dignity, and feeling like Mrs Crummles when she stood upon her head on the butt-end of a spear surrounded with blazing fireworks. But I have a shrewd suspicion that even in that situation the lady knew the acting of the company's Mr Lenville from that of Mr Kean. Some day when I have more time I shall return to this question of modern art. A critic should declare where he stands.

Feb. 16 According to Samuel Butler, man grows like the
Tuesday. things he eats. If that is so, it has been going on a
 long time. A newer peril is that man may grow to
 resemble the things he looks at. It is an appalling thought that

the minds of film critics should grow like the films they criticise. The normal film-goer never thinks about what he sees on the screen; it is seven o'clock when he goes in and half-past nine when he comes out, which is all that matters. But the film critic who has to make an article out of the wretched stuff must give at least some part of his mind to it. At least half the attention I give to any film is spent in trying to find a peg for an article about something else. To-night's affair at the New Gallery permits of a divagation so marvellously happy and so miraculously apt that I am grasping it with both hands. The film, says the preliminary "literature," is all about Marlene as a miner's doxy, and the action takes place in Pittsburgh. Now Pittsburgh is the town in which Duse died. "Yes?" says the reader. "What about it?" Only that it revives the old question as to how much of Duse was genius and how much guff.

I have been looking again at Arthur Symons's book. In this I read how she reached "a supremacy in art, so divine in her pure humanity, so mystic in the spiritual sense of the word, and so pathetic in her humility, which has rarely if ever been equalled, and which could never or rarely be surpassed." Symons quotes with approval another disciple: "She was doubly the chalice. To the mystery and exaltation of her art was added a strange element of aloofness, which made her a great person in the case of another drama which we call Life." Let us see now how Duse comported herself in that other drama which we call Life. On the same page I read: "A banquet was given after her last performance by the Italians residing in New York in Duse's honour, at which the whole company was present, but the guest of honour's place was vacant. She refused; she knew what a vexation it would be to hear the speeches, so she remained alone in the hotel with a book, which was much more to her taste." Is this grave discourtesy to her compatriots and hosts to be taken as an example of that spiritual mysticism and unsurpassable humility? Or is it an instance of the "strange element of aloofness"? Am telling readers of the *Tatler* that there is an element of aloofness in their film critic, who, knowing what vexation it would be to hear that film dialogue,

decided to remain at home with a book, which was much more to his taste.

Feb. 19 Take, as Mrs Beeton would say, a Voice belonging to
Friday. an innocent who behaves like Lamb's friend, George
 Dyer, but is a very Dr Pepusch at the spinet. Mix
this, as Mrs Beeton would continue, with another Voice, this
time a feminine one. Attire this organ in what Fielding describes
as "Stays and Jumps," and let her that owns the Voice wear
gauntlets and carry a riding-whip. To these add yet a third
Voice, lighter and shriller than the last and belonging to a maiden
niminy-piminising in white muslin and a corner but ready to
take a hand in that waltz-time terzetto in which, in this kind of
musical play, all emotional crises are ultimately resolved. Add
some vanilla-flavoured, reminiscent Viennese music, bespeak
dialogue without wit, see that the clowns are unfunny, dress
the show well, keep the lights full on, allow to simmer for three
hours, and your unsophisticated audience won't care whether you
call the thing *Old Vienna* or *Old Heidelberg*. To-night's was called
Old Chelsea. Actually these honey-coloured, jasmine-scented
jamborees are not susceptible of criticism. "Methinks," said the
Gauntlet towards the end of the second act, "you did wrong to
come." Methought this was addressed to me. Metook the hint.

Feb. 25 Dined with Sir Pelham Warner at the Conservative
Thursday. Club. A man of great charm and with enough
 modesty to go round a whole room. During dinner
I contrived that the talk should all be about cricket. Among
other things, P. W. said that he once asked Ranji who in his opinion
was the world's greatest batsman. Ranji replied, "On a hard,
fiery wicket, W. G., easily. But on all wickets, Charlo." (This
was Ranji's name for C. B. Fry.) Warner talked a lot about
Fry. How he saw him make his record long-jump, how the
measurements were taken over and over again, and how the
crowd shouted at the announcement of a world record. He
remembered the famous match between Oxford and Blackheath.
How Fry could run like a stag, and how if he failed to tackle his

man it didn't matter because he could run after him, catch him up, and tackle him again. How in the match against Blackheath Fry outran and out-mancœuvred the opposite backs and scored three tries, grounding the ball each time in the dead centre of the goal-posts. How after the match the crowd, cheering, followed him all the way back to Wadham. A lot more talk about the great cricketers of the past. In return for which I told him the story of how I bowled out W. G. Grace first ball. I was seven at the time, and the family was staying, I think, at either Blackpool or Llandudno. I was playing cricket on the sands, and presently a huge man with an immense black beard offered to bowl to me. He did not seem much good at bowling on the soft pitch with a tennis ball, and I hit him all over the place. Being a well-brought-up little boy, I presently asked whether the gentleman would not like an innings, for which purpose I handed him my tiny bat. I bowled, the ball hit on a flat pebble, and instead of bouncing slithered between the two walking-sticks which were the wickets, the Great Man having played about two feet over it! (He would have ricked his back if he had done anything else.) I remember my father, who was sitting on the promenade pretending to watch, but actually reading the *Manchester Guardian*, laughing a great deal and telling me that I had bowled the world's greatest batsman. Which, let me confess, seemed to me a perfectly natural thing to do. After dinner we adjourned to the smoking-room, where I thought it only fair to exchange P. W.'s shop for mine, as he is very keen on the theatre. Wherefore I trotted out some of my best anecdotes, and the evening ended all square.

March 1 Letter from George Richards ends, "I must conclude
Monday. now as the wireless is about to give us Hindemith's *La Chapelle Wesleyenne Engloutie*."

March 10 Took "Plum" Warner—it would be affected not
Wednesday. to call him this in spite of the short acquaintance—to the revival of *What Every Woman Knows*. He pretended that to be escorted by the critic of the *Sunday Times*

was like being taken into the pavilion at Lord's by W. G. Grace. A crowd of snotty-nosed little autograph-hunters, finding nobody else to pester, fastened on me. Which, said "Plum," reminded him of Bradman after a big score. And for the rest of the evening he called me Don. All rather old-worldly and pleasant, like the first act of *Mary Rose*. At supper I asked "Plum" which was the best innings he had ever played. He said, "One against Lancashire at Old Trafford in which I scored 6. The next best was 24 in the second innings of Gentlemen *v.* Players, at Lord's, in 1913. The wicket was extremely difficult—very hot sunshine pouring down on a pitch which had previously been saturated by rain—and the bowlers one had to face were Barnes, from the Pavilion end, and Tarrant, from the Nursery end. I remember saying to Barnes at the fall of a wicket, 'You know, Barney, it's an intellectual treat trying to play you on this wicket,' and he smiled and said, 'How long are you going to stay in?' and I replied, 'That depends on you.' I have a distinct recollection of almost every ball. Barnes was getting so much spin that he literally tore pieces out of the turf. In the end I was caught at the wicket off him—a most magnificent catch by E. J. ("Tiger") Smith, of Warwickshire. The ball off which Smith made this great catch was a leg-break of perfect length, which jumped very quickly and just touched the thumb of my right-hand glove. "Tiger," standing at his full height, caught the ball in front of his right eye, and I remember saying to him afterwards, 'I think I was a bit unlucky because most wicket-keepers would have ducked, and I should have scored a four.' In his description of the match the *Times* correspondent was kind enough to make some very complimentary remarks about this innings of 24 of mine, and finished by saying, 'Had Mr Warner not been playing so extremely well he would not have touched that beautiful leg-break from Barnes, off which Smith made his great catch.'"

March 19 That nimble, irrepressible, but withal quiet wit,
Friday. Spike Hughes, was in great form at the Club to-day.

The conversation turning on J. B. Priestley, he murmured, "Post scriptum homo tristis est." *ri*

March 28 I have said good-bye to my little champion. Before *Sunday.* the war I refused £1500 for him; last week, on

Rubinstein's urgent recommendation, I accepted an offer of £100, which just about pays for his keep during the last three and a half years. I am enough of a mathematician to realise that it is exactly as though, on the day the war started, I had taken my little horse out of his box and made a present of him to the first passer-by.

April 17 Transport difficulties making it essential that I *Saturday.* should live nearer the theatres, I have left the Villa Volpone and taken a flat in Grape Street, Holborn.

On Monday last I opened the door to the incarnation of Miss Skiffins, complete with green gloves. It announced in an excessively genteel voice that it was the lady who was going to "do" for the gent on the first floor. Meaning me. Since I hate people who are above their jobs I took an instant dislike to the incarnation, but, discovering that its husband had been blind from birth, struck a bargain at 5s. 6d. a morning, two mornings a week. Whereupon it vanished, and has not been since seen.

April 18 The flat being empty, I practise the piano for an *Sunday.* hour—a thing I have not done since I was a boy.

Afterwards cook my own lunch—a thing I have not done for twenty years. Pork Chop. Looking for guidance in my Electrical Cookery Book, I turn up the letter "P," and find any amount of instruction about Peach Gâteau, Petits Fours, Pineapple Soufflée, Pound Cake, and Prairie Oysters, but not a word about Pork Chops. Look up Chops Mutton and Chops Pork and again draw blank. However, I manage somehow, and a chunk of cheese crowns a meal as good as any to be had in the West End.

April 19 Pity the old player who clings to the stage long after *Monday.* nature, propriety, and his best friends have hinted that he should retire. You take some young person to see a woman who, only a brief twenty years ago, was a great

actress and a famous beauty. The curtain rises, and there is exposed an aged, wrinkled puppet meaning and looking nothing. And the chit by your side is plainly asking herself, "Is *this* the face. . . ." Or you take a schoolboy to see some once-great actor whose gestures might have been limned by Michael Angelo and whose voice you remember as having the surge and swell of some cathedral organ. And what do you behold? An old pantaloone with a sagging paunch and "most weak hams." And you wonder—or do you?—at the schoolboy who wishes you had taken him to the pictures instead. This afternoon I spent an hour and a half of exquisite melancholy looking at Duvivier's *La Fin du Jour*. This film is about a Home for Retired Actors and Actresses. All these Bajazets and Polyeuctes, these Alcestes and Don Diègues, these Andromaches and Paulines, Célimènes and Angéliques—all the cast have the heads and masks of actors and actresses. See one of these *cabotins* pacing a boulevard and you will say to yourself, "Aha, an old trouper." The women, too, have that undeniable actress-look; you would never mistake them for dressmakers, or procuresses, or even *femmes du monde en décadence*. Bad actors too, *tragédiens de province*, stars in Lyons or Marseilles, players who have borne the brunt of a great art with nothing to support them except their love and their loyalty. Figures in a dream-world who in their heyday lived on and in their dreams, and who, now that their sun has set, continue to subsist on the recollection of those dreams. How well we know Jouvet's St Clair, that matinée idol of some forty years' standing, now in the unconcealable sixties. Is his luxuriant hair dyed? We think it must be. Are his eyes a little strained? We feel that he is beginning to need that monocle he has used with such dashing effect. Is his step a little less springy? Yes, and we would hazard that the throat, were we allowed to see it, has become a little more stringy. Is this would-be embodiment of youth and romance as jaunty as of yore? Yes, but pitifully so. And therein lies his tragedy. There is a fine sensitive performance by Victor Francen of a sincere actor called Marny, the equivalent, one feels, of our own Hermann Vezin, whom everybody admired and nobody

went to see. Cold, unimpassioned, perfect in technique, Vezin could have met—and defeated—any argument advanced against his acting. The only difficulty was that when Vezin was the leading player no one seemed to want to visit that particular theatre. Duvivier alleges some private emotional sequence as the explanation of Marny's failure. But we know better. He is just the correct, unsuccessful player. In the centre of the picture is Cabrissade, grandly played by Michel Simon. Here is that well-known phenomenon, the man who is an artist to his finger-tips *off* the stage. What fire! What *fougue*! What temperament! What a *finished* and consummate comedian! And all who know Cabrissade know also that nothing happens when he is *on* the stage. But nothing at all! *For the man can't act*. And therein lies his tragedy. It is these failures—Duvivier stresses the point—who are most in love with their calling. The stage is their world and without it they cease to exist. They spend their working years rehearsing for the success they are never to have, and their years of retirement lying about the triumphs they never had. Of such is Cabrissade, a buffoon with the mind of a monkey, but, alas, without the monkey's power of mimicry. He is your *bon enfant* possessed of the traditional *caur d'or*, and it is this which is remembered in the speech at his graveside. "No," says the failure Marny, "no, my good friend Cabrissade, I will not, in this funeral oration which you *penned* yourself, proclaim you to have been a man of talent. You never possessed one shred of talent. But you loved the theatre passionately, and it is for that that we mourn you."

May 24 People who relate their dreams are bores. Nevertheless,
Monday. here is an old one of mine. It dates back to the time
 when my mother first took me to London. I enter a
 chemist's shop to inquire the price of a magnificent piece of old
 brocade in the window, leaving my mother sitting on the door-
 step. The melancholy proprietor bows and says, "Good morn-
 ing, young gentleman, I am Hermann Vezin." Abashed, I quit
 the shop in haste, stumbling over my mother, who rises and
 points to the street. There I behold a procession of grooms in

Lincoln green, with cockades in their hats, leading a string of white and dappled palfreys. From wallets slung at their sides they take handfuls of gay-coloured butterflies and launch them into the air. "That," says my mother composedly, "is the new way of advertising croquet on the Thames Embankment!"

I bethought me of this when, in the Café Royal to-night, a total stranger came up to me and said, "Mr Agate, permit me to tell you of a dream I had last night. It was about you. You were sitting on the grass in Regent's Park surrounded entirely by wicker-work and leather straps. I said, 'What caper are you up to now, Mr Agate?' And you replied, 'No caper at all. I am making a luncheon basket for Dame Madge Kendal!'"

May 30 Here is something from Ernest's column in the *S.T.* :
Sunday.

Score-reading is absolutely indispensable, in more ways than one, to anyone to whom listening to music in the concert-room is something more than a sort of ear-bath, anyone who really wants to know what, so to speak, the composer is talking about. The disparagers of score-reading seem to imagine that the pure essence of a work is embodied in the sound of it, with the corollary that when we have heard the sounds we have necessarily heard the work. I propose to try and show that this is pure delusion, that we can hear a given piece of music a hundred times and yet, if we do not know it also from the sight of the notes the composer has put on paper, get no further than the outer rim of his thought.

Which has inspired me to the following one-act drama :

ERNEST AND HIS COOK

Play in One Act

SCENE : *Ernest's dining-room. Evidence of cerebration everywhere. Over the mantelpiece a portrait of "Béla Bartók's Musical Make-up" by Twerpp. On the piano, whose keyboard has been removed, is the score of Jacob Britain's Concertante for bagpipes, foghorn, siren, road-drill, and Wurlitzer, with a marker to tell Ernest where he left off reading. It is lunch-time.*

ERNEST. An excellent pudding, my love.

MRS N. I'm glad you like the flavour.

ERNEST. Flavour? What has flavour to do with it?

Mrs N (*mildly*). Then what is it you like about it, dear?

ERNEST (*testily*). Flavour is mere mouth-wash. [*Correcting himself*] I should have said tongue-bath. What interests me is the thinking behind the pudding. Pray ask cook to write out her recipes for me in future. I hate getting no further than the outer rim of her culinary thought!

CURTAIN

June 1 Get up feeling wholly miserable. Spend the morning
Tuesday. writing letters. Take George Mathew to lunch at the Club, where Moiseiwitsch joins us, and while he talks I feel better. Back to flat feeling worse. Then says Leo, "Sit down, James, and I'll play to you." And he plays that agonising slow movement from the Hammerklavier Sonata, followed by the Chopin Valse, Opus 64, No. 3—and if the reader doesn't think these two pieces go together he should get somebody to play them both in succession. Like turning from a *Crucifixion* to some exquisite flower piece. (I suppose Ernest Newman would say that a blind man wouldn't be able to appreciate the grace and beauty of the Valse unless he had read it in Braille beforehand.) Then, remembering how Sarah, when she felt faint, used to run up six flights of stairs and go through her wardrobe, I rouse myself and dictate some twenty-six letters, advising young men what to do with their manuscripts, informing widows at Leamington and Ashton-under-Lyne that an illustrated edition of Shakespeare published in 1885 and the second volume of the first edition of *Pendennis* possess no commercial value. And so forth and so on—a complete waste of ink, paper, stamps, time, temper, and nerves. Feeling like nothing on earth, I dress, hie me to a cab and drive to Westminster to dine with good Mrs Belloc-Lowndes, who gives me an excellent meal with champagne, after which I fall asleep! Apologise and leave early, that best of hostesses and kindest of friends realising that I am ill. And don't close an eye all night. About five o'clock I am convinced, as of old,

that I am suffering from a combination of D.T.'s and G.P.I. Think of making my will, but make some tea instead. Round about six fall into a stupor so deep that the charwoman belabouring the south entry fails to wake me. Better this morning, and thoroughly ashamed of myself for failing to recognise my old friend Dyspepsia.

June 5; It is now established that Leslie Howard was on
Saturday. the Lisbon plane brought down by the Germans
 this week. Because Leslie, in private life, was an
entirely delightful person, most, if not all, of his obituarists have
fallen into the trap of regarding him as a considerable actor. Do
I have to go over the old ground for the hundredth time? Yes,
I suppose so. Irving was always Irving, with this important
proviso; that there were at least twenty Irvings, and all of them
different. Thus, Lesurques in *The Lyons Mail* was always Irving,
but so was Dubosc, who in no way resembled Lesurques except
in the matter of physical likeness. Similarly with Hamlet and
Jingle, Macbeth and Dr Primrose. "Leave Irving out of it," you
say impatiently. "What about Gerald du Maurier? Was he
not always himself?" Yes. But himself in the way that what
he put on the stage was an urgent, heightened, *theatrical* presenta-
tion of Geraldism, whereas what Leslie insisted upon giving
was a subdued, abstract, non-theatrical precipitate of Howard-
ism. Perhaps because of his physical limitations Leslie chose to
be the super-quietist. I find that in my first notice of him, dated
August 1926, when he played the part of a gigolo in a play by
Lord Lathom entitled *The Way You Look At It*, I wrote that
Howard "achieved the very considerable feat of making the
audience like the actor while loathing the character"! Through-
out his entire career he played to be liked. Presently came *Her
Cardboard Lover* (1928) with the same gigolo all over again.
More likeable than ever in *Berkeley Square*, he did no more than
skim the surface of this play's passion. Then in 1933 he appeared
as Shakespeare in *This Side Idolatry*. Turning up what I wrote,
I find that he "possessed Shakespeare's mask and could look
the beatific sheep to perfection, but that in the way of acting

all he could do was to thump his chest gently once and say that that was where Hamlet's tragedy took place." I ended: "If this Shakespeare wrote *Antony and Cleopatra*, then one must believe that a mouse can give birth to a mountain." As a film actor he exuded more charm than anybody I have ever seen; one sensed that the books he and his pipe were always shyly peeping over were whimsies by A. A. Milne. Is this a harsh judgment? I believe it to be a true one. Leslie gave me a great deal of pleasure; but it was the pleasure that comes not from the riot of acting but from the delighted sense of privileged contact with a sympathetic personality and a sensitive mind. And an English mind. Everything about Leslie was English—his manner, look, talk, pipe, slacks, and golf-jacket. He was of Hungarian extraction.

Have just heard that my old friend Alfred Chenhalls was on the plane. In spite of the fact that if he mislaid pipe or spectacles he would scream like a rogue elephant and was, or pretended to be, a mass of nerves, everybody knew him to be the kindest of souls. He was the *gayest* man I ever met.

June 8 A few days ago I received a letter from a gentleman
Tuesday. with a foreign name saying he had been a constant
 reader of my S.T. articles for years, and had never
 been able to make head or tail of them. Would I lunch at the
Ritz and explain them? I accepted, and found a remarkable
little man, plump and dapper, who started by telling me that
he was seventy-two, the father of six sons in the Forces and six
daughters in convents, that he was extremely rich, had never
borrowed money, was possessed of sexual powers which would
astonish me, and was utterly weary of life, the span of which,
however, he not merely desired, but claimed to be able to
lengthen. He then told me that he was a scientist. "Look at
the two of us," he said. "Compare your veins with mine."
And he held out a hand as podgy and creaseless as a baby's.
"Do you not think it dreadful," he continued, "that in some
five years' time, perhaps less, you will be carried out in a box
and either burnt or buried in a hole in the earth? And in a

little while you will be as completely forgotten as Gladstone or Mounet-Sully. Now, my dear sir, you can, if you desire it, live to be three hundred years old, and I alone know the secret." Which turned out to be that one mustn't wash one's face in warm water. Finally this eccentric, straight from the pages of Smollett, drove me to the Savage Club, and as the taxi was turning round, put his head out of the window and said, "If you will visit me at my house on the Cornish cliffs I will show you a postcard from Ibsen."

June 9 I was asked to-night why I decline to have truck
Wednesday. with intellectuals after business hours. But of
course I won't. 1. I am not an intellectual. Two
minutes' talk with Aldous Huxley, William Glock, or any of the
New Statesman crowd would expose me utterly. 2. I am too
tired after my day's work to man the intellectual palisade. 3. When
my work is finished I want to eat, drink, smoke, and relax. 4. I
don't know very much, but what I do know I know better than
anybody, and I don't want to argue about it. I know what I
think about an actor or an actress, and am not interested in
what anybody else thinks. My mind is not a bed to be made
and re-made.

I had hardly written the last word when the postman brought
the latest number of *Modern Reading*. I open at random and
find this in an essay by John Cowper Powys :

An elderly idealist is bound to feel a bit nervous and inclined
to step gingerly, like a clergyman entering a bar, as he makes
his first advances among the frequenters of the Terraqueous
Tavern of Finn Mac Cool ; but coming to Joyce's Freudian,
Pantagrueian, Shandyeian, Macaronic *English-Irish*, straight
from a struggle with the *Welsh-English* of what might be called
"The Six Hundred Years' War," since it ranges round the
question as to whether the perpetually reincarnating Taliesin
might, in the ordinary sense of the word, be regarded as
having "lived" in the Sixth or in the Twelfth Centuries, I am
compelled to make that special and curious plunge required of
anyone who passes from an atmosphere of "Brythonic-Iberian
Esotericism" into an atmosphere of Goidelic-Nordic Burlesque.

Is it thinkable that after a day of hard work I want to spend the evening racking my brains over stuff like this ?

June 11 Is Simonov's *The Russians* a muddled play? Yes.
Friday. Badly constructed? Yes. All over the place? Yes.

Is it, in turns, drama of incident, psychological study of a people in time of unbearable stress, pure film-fodder? Yes. Is the story of a marooned band of guerrillas an exemplification of the fog of war, the fog of war in Russia, the fog of a Russian play about war? Undeniably, yes. Has it something of the poetry of heroism? Is there a love-story of some nobility tucked away in it? Is it the product of an adult mind? Is it conceived in terms of the stage and not of the lecture platform? Is it well laid out for actors? Is it exciting? Is it, in fine, worth while? Enormously so. Superb performances by Michael Golden and Freda Jackson.

June 14 To-day, it appears, Leo completes his second year as
Monday. my secretary, amanuensis, typist, and general factotum.

Of his efficiency in some of these occupations perhaps the less said the better. But I find a deal of truth in a note which he left on my desk last night, and from which I quote the following :

Having no head for figures, I sought the help of a friendly accountant, who, after I had told him that my two years in your employ represented some 616 days of eight hours each, not including Sundays, arrived at a total of 4928 hours spent with thee, dear heart! About "strings of pearls" I say nothing. What I should like to boast to the world is that you, the most irritable, impatient, intolerant of men, should have survived nearly *five thousand* hours of my company, all within a couple of years! I told this to H., and he said, "James deserves the Victoria Cross!" No one said anything about what *my* deserts might be, but I waive this, as a poor employee has only a few holding notes while the employer is lording it over the entire score.

Some silly people have thought your picture of me in the *Ego's* malicious. They are wrong, you have done me more than justice. You omitted to tell of my worst faults and habits ;

of my maddening garrulity, my tactlessness, my absurd and quite irrational alternations of ecstasy and despair, my mutterings and gurglings and talkings to myself. And the habits! On the incessant sneezings and coughings you have remarked. But how about the spittings on the floor, the belchings and the dribblings, the dubious linen, frayed clothes, and those greasy old hats? I shall laugh as long as I live over that day when you rashly took me to the Savoy to lunch with Sir Something Somebody and his smart friends, and when we got there eyed the suit I was wearing and with quite unwonted tact slipped a pound-note into my hand and suggested that I shouldn't like the people or the food and would be happier lunching elsewhere. Which, cheerfully, I did.

I am glad we have stuck it together even thus long. Wonderful, when one thinks how instinctively I fly from my friends and am attracted only to my enemies!

LEO

June 16 Noel Coward and Gladys Calthrop fulfilled a Wednesday. promise to lunch made six months ago. They called for me, and I showed them round the flat, which they liked very much. Gladys fell in love with the balcony room and vowed she would use it in her next set of designs, while Noel said he should write a new and sparkling comedy round it. I had intended to introduce Leo to them, but the old 'un had a sudden access of coyness or temper or something, locked himself in the bathroom, and refused to emerge till we had departed. Michael Shepley joined us at the Ivy and everything was very gay. Discussing an intellectual actor who can't act, Michael says, "The worst thing about him is the way he whinnies." I say, "I think you mean 'neighs.' Only mares whinny." Whereupon Noel claps his hands and cries, "Splendid! You've given me the title for my new comedy—*Only Mares Whinny!*"

Cochran's *Seventy Years of Song* went off without a hitch except that in the excitement the band left out "The Lily of Laguna." The most popular item was Vi Loraine and George Robey singing "If You Were the Only Girl in the World," with another great welcome for Ivor Novello in "Keep the Home Fires Burning" Ivor, who was fifty last January, didn't look a day

over thirty-five; his charm is as amazing as ever. I shall always say that there are more brains and more sheer acting capacity in this young man than anyone has ever supposed. An oversight to leave out "Take Me Back to Dear Old Blighty," musically speaking the best of our soldier songs. And I should like to have heard the sentimental "There's a Long, Long Trail a-Winding." Parry's "Jerusalem" was a first-class mistake. But then I have lived at Swiss Cottage and know what comes of building Jerusalem in green and pleasant Hampstead!

June 17 Luncheon to Lord Kemsley and W. W. Hadley,
Thursday. respectively proprietor and editor of the *Sunday Times*, to mark my twenty years of service. Lady Kemsley graced the occasion, and the party, again at the Ivy, was if possible gayer than yesterday's! After lunch I showed them round the flat, which seemed to amuse them. This time Leo remained on view and received my guests very graciously.

June 19 War or no war, I think the advertisement in the
Saturday. front page of to-day's *Times* beginning "Lady over military age" is ridiculous.

June 23 That pretty girl and nice woman, Veronica Rose,
Wednesday. having given me a bottle of whiskey, I asked a few people in last night to drink it. Read them some modern poetry, choosing the last stanza of one of George Barker's *Sacred Elegies*, published in the new number of *Horizon*:

Incubus, Anæsthetist with glory in a bag,
Foreman with a sweatbox and a whip. Asphyxiator
Of the ecstatic. Sergeant with a grudge
Against the lost lovers in the park of creation.
Fiend behind the fiend behind the fiend behind the
Friend. Mastodon with mastery, monster with an ache
At the tooth of the ego, the dead drunk judge:
Wheresoever Thou art our agony will find Thee
Enthroned on the darkest altar of our heartbreak
Perfect. Beast, brute, bastard. O dog my God!

Michael Shepley broke the silence by saying, "Gosh, that's

beautiful. I must hang it over my bed!" This reminded me of something, and leaving them to the whiskey I hunted till I found it. It turned out to be a passage in *The Theatrical World* for 1893 in which Archer writes, "'It is the ambition of my life,' a poet-dramatist once said to me, 'to write a really *obscure* poem.'" Being scrupulously conscientious, I telephoned Cyril Connolly, who edits *Horizon*, to ask whether 'friend' in the sixth line should be "fiend." He said, "I don't know. It is 'friend' in the typescript which came to me from America. Nine-tenths of the poem is beyond me, but it has beautiful lines which make me feel that Barker is a poet. I printed it for this reason, and also because I understand he is hard-up." A significant criticism of modern poetry that it doesn't matter whether you print the word the poet meant or its opposite!

June 27 Vignette in Holborn. Two old men are sitting
Sunday. reading. One has his eyes bent on this :

Vois sur ces canaux
Dormir ces vaisseaux
Dont l'humeur est vagabonde ;
C'est pour assouvir
Ton moindre désir
Qu'ils viennent du bout du monde.
—Les soleils couchants
Revêtent les champs,
Les canaux, la ville entière,
D'hyacinthe et d'or ;
Le monde s'endort
Dans une chaude lumière.

The other is smiling over this loveliness :

Upon her head a plaited hive of straw,
Which fortified her visage from the sun,
Whereon the thought might think sometime it saw
The carcass of a beauty spent and done
Time had not scythed all that youth begun,
Nor youth all quit ; but, spite of heaven's fell rage,
Some beauty peep'd through lattice of sear'd age.

The telephone rings, and a Scotch voice says, "If you turn on the wireless, Jamie, you'll hear some beautiful singing."

J. A. puts down his *Lover's Complaint* and does as he is bid. It is Maggie Teyte singing Duparc's *Phydilé* and Berlioz' *Spectre de la Rose*. At the conclusion of the second J. A. turns off the wireless and resumes his Shakespeare. L. P. takes up his Baudelaire again.

July 18 Ivor Brown ends his article in the *Observer* to-day: *Sunday*. "What is wrong now is not a vulgar choice of play (ancient and modern classics are booming in London), but the reluctance of the many to see these plays unless they are festooned with star-names in the cast. True, the stars have usually earned their stardom, but we shall never have any innovation and vitality in the drama if nobody will attend the unstarred article." My experience over fifty years is that the unstarred article is the article not worth starring. Where, pray, are the actors to come from? I put the number of players in London worth watching at 300. If every town and village in England is to have its complement, then some 30,000 will be required. And they won't and can't be there. When I was a young man I was content to sit on a stool in a dingy Manchester warehouse writing out tickets and gumming them on to samples of flannelette day after day and week after week, knowing that when I had saved enough money I should have my jaunt to London or Paris and see Mrs Patrick Campbell or Réjane. The essence of a capital is that provincials will put up with their drab existence in order to enjoy, once every three months or so, a delirious week-end of theatres, restaurants, and what-not, such as only a capital can provide. For the provincial who has talent London should still be a battlefield. "A nous deux maintenant!" exclaimed Rastignac, shaking his fist at Paris. I cannot see that "A nous deux, Barrow-in-Furness!" can ever be the same thing. Or that Beardsley's

réclame and recall,
Paris and St Petersburg, Vienna and St James's Hall

can be translated into

réclame and recall,
Poplar and St Margaret's, Llandudno and the parish hall.

July 24 I am disposed to write to-day about golf. Why?
Saturday Because it is a fine Saturday, and if it were peace-time and I were eight or ten years younger I should now be getting into the car and running down to Thorpe Bay to challenge, at the odds of four bisques, my old foe Fred Winsor, from whom I heard this morning. A letter from Ma's would not have seemed stranger. Winsor writes :

Since joining the service (R.A.F.) two and a half years ago and running the pro's job at Ruislip I seem to have had all my time occupied, even so I feel very guilty in not having written to you before. I sincerely hope you are in the best of health, and that although times are difficult you still manage to have a game of golf. I play quite a lot at Moor Park for the R.A.F. which I will admit is very fortunate for me. I often think of the blood-matches we used to have—Thorpe Hall, Orsett, and Burnham-on-Crouch, and I wish we could arrange to have a game this season. Perhaps you would let me know if this is possible and if so the most convenient course for you. Hoping you do not mind me writing to you, and also it will not be long before we get back to those clever bisques of yours. . . .

"Clever bisques." What a world this brings up, a world I thought I had forgotten. Let me face it ; I shan't play golf again. Unless, of course, they lay out a special course with a moving belt like an escalator running along the fairway. I might manage six holes on a flat course, but what would be the good of that ? Yet I mustn't complain. I have had my good times, and I was a goodish golfer. Who but a goodish player would have got down to a handicap of two without ever mastering, indeed always muffing, the key-shot of the game ? Despite hours, days, and weeks of coaching and practice, I never mastered the mashie. I remember hearing Tommy Renouf tell Edgar Baerlein, who was plus 3, that his mashie shot was a glorified jab. Mine wasn't even glorified. It was nothing. My driving was longish and fairly accurate. (Shall I ever forget four superb tee-shots at the four last holes at Deal ?) My spoon-shots were dreams of Hiltonesque efficiency. (I remember a bobby-dazzler at New-

castle, County Down.) My iron-play was like Drake's conquest of the Pacific. (Was there not a cleek shot in the teeth of a gale at Walton Heath which settled the match and took us out of the rain?) My niblick? Not Hagen ever got more successfully out of cattle-trodden ground. Why, then, were my mashie shots hopeless? But I must stop drooling. That way melancholy lies.

Aug. 3 With Leo to Cheltenham for a Brains Trust in connection with that town's "Holidays at Home" week.
Tuesday.

Empty carriage as far as Reading, where a lady and two children got in. The children more lovely than amours on a ceiling. But their behaviour! For three hours they climbed all over me, alternately petted and pummelled me while their mother looked on rapturously. "I don't pretend they're manageable," she said. "I was unmanageable at their age. Besides, their father likes them like that." "What is their father?" "A colonel." "And where is the Colonel?" "In India." And with that she settled herself to sleep. While all this was happening Leo sat unmoved in his corner reading Goethe's *Faust*, and it occurred to me that a painter, to do justice to the scene, would have to be a combination of Raphael and Goerg! We found the Brains Trust winding up a hectic day which had included a Chepstow and Wye Valley ramble, a talk at the Art Gallery on "The Geology of Gloucestershire," a mixed doubles American handicap tennis tournament, a bathing ramble, a cricket match, a baby show, donkeys, and Prof. Bofeys' Punch and Judy show. Exactly like a day in the city Jack Priestley's characters came to.

Aug. 18 The *plat du jour* at the Café Royal to-night being
Wednesday. sturgeon, I was reminded of the best curtain-line I ever heard. This was after the last war, at the end of some French farce in which Max Dearly, as a colonel in charge of Russian opera, had as personal attendant a *moujik* rather larger than W. G. Grace and bearded even more formidably. The *moujik* was mute until the play's last minute, when a ravishing

girl appeared, whereupon he burst into a roar of laughter. "Qu'est-ce que tu as à rire, espèce d'idiot?" said Max. "Je pensais," replied the big fellow, "que si j'étais esturgeon et si mademoiselle était esturgeonne, il y aurait ÉNORMÉMENT de caviar cette saison!"

Aug. 26 Gave the toast at the dinner to-night to Sir Pelham
Thursday. Warner at Lord's Tavern. Had prepared it very carefully, and it went down well, I think. "Plum" made one of the most graceful speeches I have ever listened to, with lots of old-world erudition and an astonishing divagation into the story of Cetewayo and the great Chaka. Only a master-speaker could have gone on without a break to the catch with which Hendren won the championship for Middlesex in the year of "Plum's" retirement. There was a delightful passage in which he spoke of the sounds and odours which make up the symphony of Lord's—"the chink of the roller, the sweet scent of new-mown grass, and the gritty smell of hot asphalt." There was another passage in which he talked about the Last Innings which he has yet to play. He charged them, if that happens in the summer, even if they put the flag at half-mast, not to stop the game. Indeed, he begged that in his honour an extra half-hour shall be played. "Plum" spoke for forty-five minutes, perhaps ten too many. But if a man can't be garrulous on an occasion like this—"shunning, postponing severance" as Whitman says—when can he be garrulous?

Aug. 29 Epitaph for King Boris of Bulgaria, who asked for
Sunday. assassination and got it:

He made a very handsome corpse, and became his coffin prodigiously.

Goldsmith's "The Good-natured Man"

Aug. 31 Entertain at the Ivy George Lyttelton, a nice, large
Tuesday. affable creature in the early sixties. We talk about *Ego*, and I tell him how nothing—which includes nerves, fatigue, worries, and what is supposed to be my work—

has been allowed to interrupt it. I tell him something of the manner of its writing, how it is part written by hand, part dictated; typed, corrected, re-typed and re-corrected; how I sit up till four in the morning over it; how, since the war, one copy has been "evacuated" to my brother at York, and another deposited at the typist's. How some of the pages are re-written five or six times. How every alteration down to semicolons (but not commas) is sent on to Brother Harry. How, every three months, there is a small revision, and every six months, a grand one. How the sheddings are so great that what ultimately appears is less than half of what I originally wrote. At this point Lyttelton asks why I don't write a supplementary volume containing all the things I have so obviously avoided. I say: "Meaning conduct, religion, sex, and all that?" He says: "Yes. You could deposit it with the British Museum with instructions that it shan't be printed for a hundred years." I say: "My dear fellow, have you seen Edward D. Johnson's *Don Adriana's Letter*?" He says he hasn't. I go on: "This shows how in the course of the Letter's twenty-five lines Bacon inserts the words 'See the Design,' and then in a faultlessly symmetrical pattern insinuates no fewer than seventeen statements as to who wrote *Love's Labour's Lost*. I have been as liberal as Bacon with my pointers." We then go on to discuss religion, the colour bar, and A. E. Housman, and lunch ends with G. L. inviting me to go down to Eton and talk to his boys.

When I get home I take up David Masson's study of De Quincey and read once more the pathetic story of his love for the little Oxford Street drab. Am struck by a passage of immediate, personal concernancy. "He had not told the *whole* truth about his London vagrancy, he said, because that was impossible, but he had told nothing but the truth." Later I glance at the *Illustrated London News* and read how somebody has discovered two new planets, the nearer of which is associated with the double star 61 Cygni, 75 million million miles away! And I reflect that if G. L. were present I could give him my views on all the things we talked about. Briefly these are: That sometime, somewhere, somehow, two people who have

wished to be united in this world shall be united in the next independent of age, station, colour, or any other bar. As I wrote in *Responsibility*, the most bizarre conceptions assail me in the matter of what I should consider a satisfactory Heaven. I want a Heaven in which Jack shall have Jill, and Darby, Joan; in which poets shall find their Evelyn Hopes and their Shropshire lads; a Heaven in which Narcissus will not tire of his body's perfection, and Leda shall dally with her Swan, and Sappho burn no longer. I conceive an ingenious metaphysical limbo where one has one's desires though they may run contrary to the other person's, where all love is requited though the requiter may know nothing about it. Here Madame Potiphar shall enjoy her Joseph without the knowledge of that sampleton, Lady Booby ensnare her footman without diminution of his virtue, Lady Wishfort have her fill of unwilling gallants, and the rich socialite smooth out the crinkles in some bored jazz-drummer's hair. Myself? I want to meet again my first grand passion, with whom, more than fifty years ago in a Derbyshire lane, I exchanged fewer than a dozen words. To go back to where we started. I hold that if those two specks, De Quincey and Little Ann of Oxford Street, are not reunited, then, despite its 75 million, million miles, the Scheme of Things shrinks to a Joke in Singularly Poor Taste.

Oct. 7 Quite casually Leo produces a Sonata for violin
Thursday. and piano which has lain in his drawer for twenty-six years. Luscious, lyrical stuff, pure 1910, reeking of Richard Strauss and, so far as I can judge, beautifully scored. I use the word to convey the complexity and richness of the texture. A romantic first movement followed by L. P.'s notion of a *marche funèbre*, and ending with a rondo which has all the verve and vim of that other Strauss in his *Fledermaus* period. Inasmuch as listening to it turns one into a Sultan of opérette with Cora Pearl tickling one's feet and Hortense Schneider spraying one with Frangipani, and since there are no *longueurs* and no uglinesses, and since the whole thing has the felicity of being pre-Bartók and pre-Bloch and pre-Berg, and seeing that it requires

two virtuoso players who know more about Vienna than being able to point to it on the map—in view of all this the poor thing hasn't a dog's chance of being performed.

Oct. 10 Peter Page is a capital hand at embroidering fantasy
Sunday. while remaining strictly truthful in the domain of fact. As a raconteur he realises that a Lie must always be (a) amusing, (b) credible, and (c) obviously a fabrication. When he recalls a pre-war holiday spent in Timbuctoo and how that city is like, in the actor's jargon, "any Number Three town," you believe him. (He did, I happen to know, once fly there for a week-end.) But when he goes on to tell you how he proceeded to the Solomon Islands and dined with the head-hunters, and how it was indistinguishable from any party at the Savoy Grill—why, then you know he is fibbing and intends you to understand this. With the most brilliant tact, and a good deal of wit, Peter sometimes leaves it to his hearers to decide in which dimension he is functioning. It isn't always easy to distinguish, because my old friend, who comes straight out of the *New Arabian Nights*, is the kind of person to whom fantastic things actually happen. At the Club to-day he told us a wonderful story about his initiation into Freemasonry and how his supporters were Willie Clarkson and Kitchener of Khartoum! This is good enough to be one of Peter's inventions; actually it happens to be true. I think I shall suggest to him that he write his Autobiography in a mixture of both veins, with a key at the end.

Nov. 12 A new complex has declared itself during the last
Friday. twelve months. This is that one day I shall stand outside Lyons' Corner House with a tray of matches; it is a bitter cold night, and I have not got my bed at Rowton House. With this in view I have been collecting sixpences, which I keep in a cash-box hidden under a loose floor-board. For months, when I have wanted to give a sixpenny tip I have given a two-shilling piece, which means at least one and sometimes three sixpences change. By this means I have accumulated

some hundreds, which I fondle in the small hours of the morning, like Gaspar in *Les Cloches de Corneville*. This is not a new neurosis but an old one revived. Forty years ago, when in business in Manchester, I was a prey to the notion that I might have to flee the country, there being no conceivable basis for such necessity. I remember that to cope with this I used to keep a passport and two hundred pounds in sovereigns locked away in a safe. At times I contemplated having a suitcase ready packed. Yet I suppose that I was then, and still am, what by ordinary standards is called sane. About one thing I am absolutely determined. I will never consult a psycho-analyst. They sit about in expensive drawing-rooms wearing hunting-stocks and nursing top-hats. I have seen them do it.

Dec. 5 Conversation in Grape Street :
Sunday.

JOCK. I've come to tell you that I'm away to the Navy in ten days' time. Unless, of course, I refuse to go.

J. A. In which case they'll put you in prison.

JOCK. And Dr Johnson would have been delighted. He would have said : " Here is a man who, rather than be a sailor, has had contrivance enough to get himself into a jail ! "

Dec. 12 My carefully prepared speech last night at the Water
Sunday. Rats Cabaret and Ball called for some quick revision.

I arrived at the Queensberry Club to find it crowded from floor to ceiling with American and Australian troops, which meant that references to Dan Leno and Arthur Roberts, and even Harry Tate and George Robey, would be lost. However, I got through somehow, and the fact that nobody knew what I was talking about gave, I understand, a tone to the proceedings. Mark played, the First Lord spoke, and all very jolly. I noticed that the speakers looked to a box on the left and began their speeches with " Your Highness." Asking who the Highness might be, I was told it was the Crown Prince of Arabia. Therefore I, too, began " Your Highness." At the end of the speech the M.C. said that the Prince had graciously consented to say

a few words. Whereupon the band struck up what appeared to be the Arabian National Anthem, we all stood, and down the stairs came a magnificent specimen of Oriental humanity attended by a woolly Ethiopian who was presumably His Highness's secretary. Splendiferously turban'd and caftan'd, the Prince took the centre of the stage with enormous dignity. And then, at a signal from the M.C., the band struck up a popular dance tune, and the pair fell into a buck and wing dance. This concluded, Bud Flanagan presented each of them with a pound note, and two of Soho's duskier denizens passed out of history. Taking my cue from Damon Runyon, I personally do not think this Crown Prince is any more Arabian than Mr Fred Emney.

Dec. 14 Jock joined the Navy to-day, and Fleet Street lost *Tuesday*. a great deal of its gaiety and charm. Let us hope it is only for a short time. His last quip to me was that, while the prospect is odious, the name of his training ship is enchanting.

Dec. 16 George Harrap telephones to say that if I want *Thursday*. *Ego* 6 to be published in the spring I must ring down now. I had contemplated ending the present, and conceivably last, instalment with a reference to the *Sunday Times* notice of *Brief Chronicles* :

This book does more than put Mr Agate unremovably in the company of our very greatest dramatic critics along with Hazlitt and Lamb and with one who might have overshadowed them all—to wit, John Keats. It also places him high in the small company of genuinely understanding and inspiring critics of Shakespeare.

Which was to have been my cue for :

Most people would take this to be a signal for their *Nunc dimittis*. With me it works the other way. I emit a barbaric, Whitmanesque yawp, and cry in my best dog-Latin, *Nunc continuo* !

And now I confess to some doubts as to whether *continue* is the right verb for me to conjugate. I have before me a booklet entitled *Music and Society*, written by a Mr Eric Siegmeister and published by the Workers' Music Association. Listen!

Can it be that we have come to the end of the period of great music? If by "great music" is meant the music that has been great in fulfilling the *bourgeois* function of music, the function of individual exaltation, personal escape, private dreams and emotions, subjective aspirations and release—then unhesitatingly we answer: "Yes!" It is unlikely that there will be many more great works of this kind—at least not in our present society. The vitality of that function of music is passing away with the vitality of the class that called it into being.

If the foregoing is held to be true of drama, then in so far as it falls to me to interpret the achievements of the bourgeois I belong to that class and must pass with it. Meaning that the day is at hand when people will buy their newspapers to read, not me, but some younger man. Very well, then. If I cannot be a draw, I am resolved not to be a drag. On the day that I am convinced that the community is the richer for my silence—I shall shut myself up in my ivory tower. "And, I suppose," laughs some Brave New Reader, "issue belated communiqués about Irving, Bernhardt, and the like?" Yes, dear boy. Except that they had no like.

